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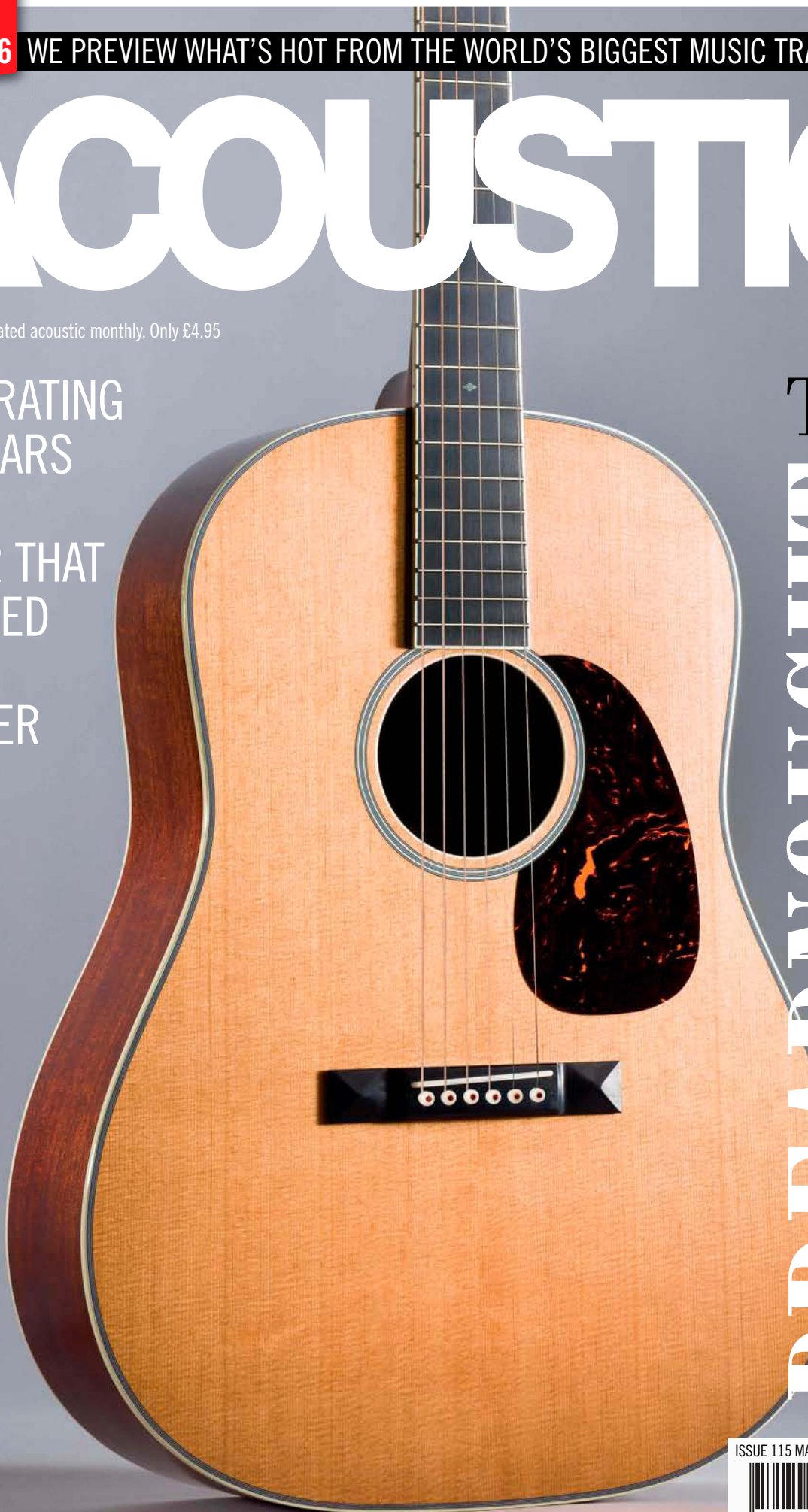

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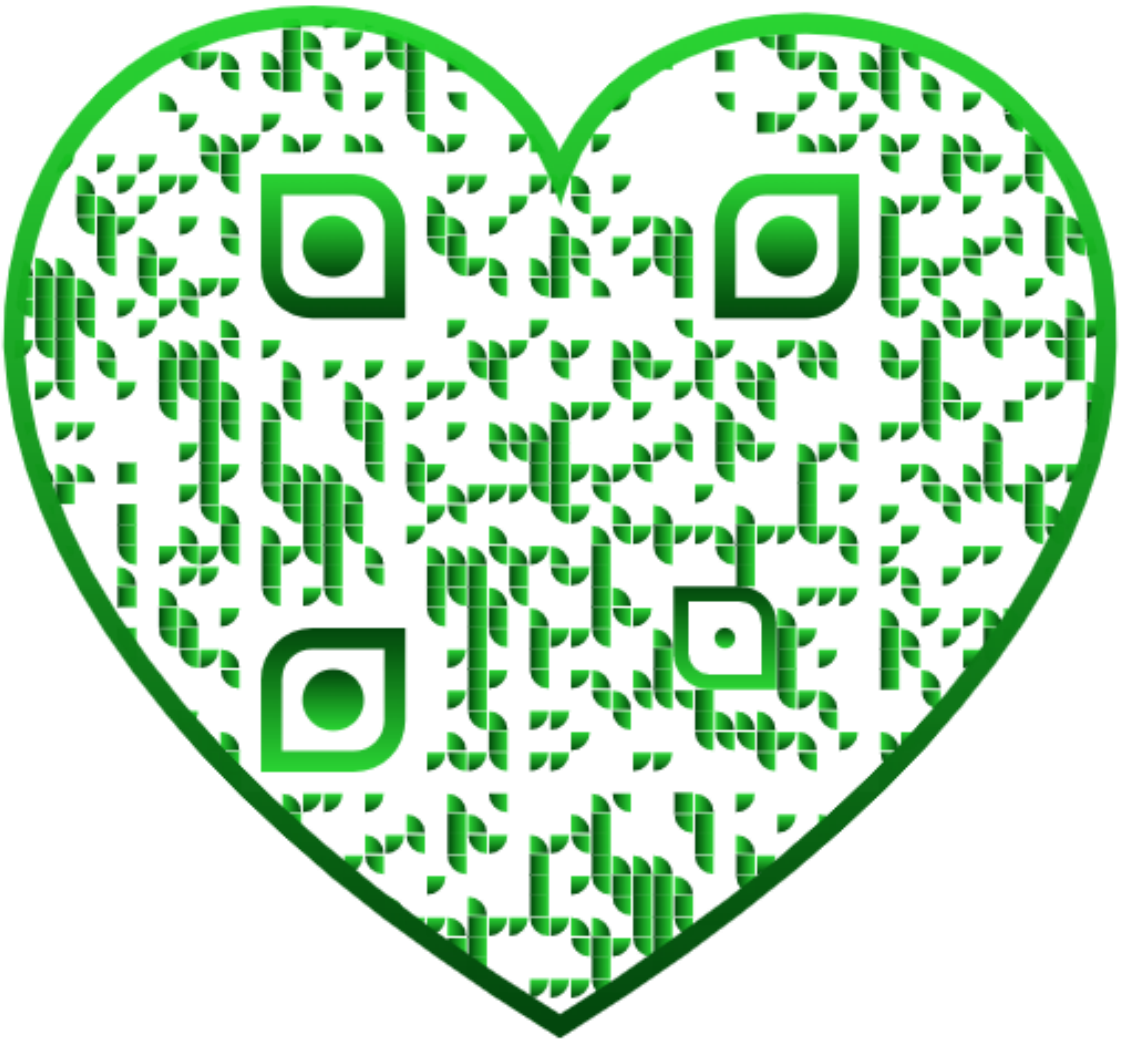

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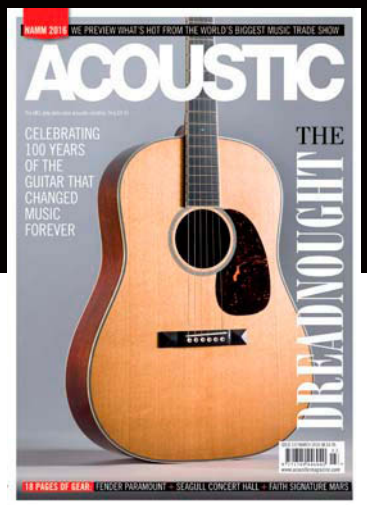
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THE ROOT NOTE

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***Acoustic* magazine is proud to support the Music Industries Association.**

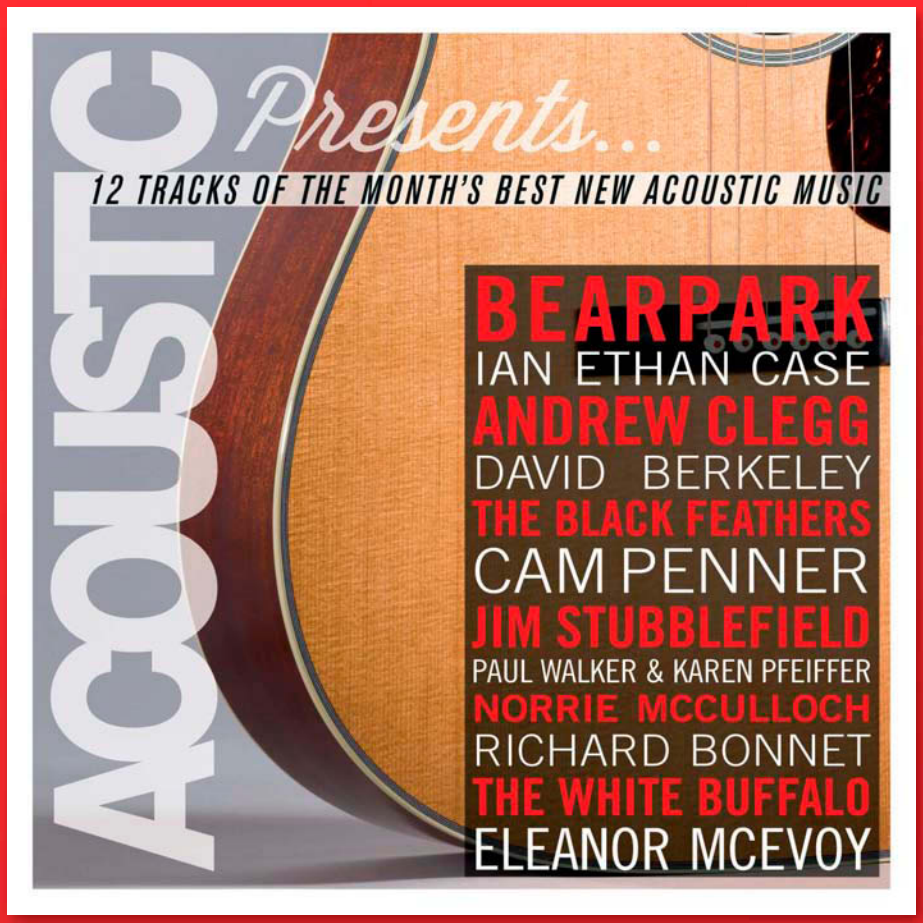
Do you remember your first? I do. I was in my mid-teens. It was a Hohner, and it didn't belong to me. The first one I actually owned was a Washburn, which was purchased from Rose Morris in London's Denmark Street. It was my prized possession until an unfortunate accident involving an ironing board and a momentary loss of balance. Although your memories will be unique to you, I'd hazard a guess that everyone who's ever strummed an acoustic guitar has owned or at least played a Dreadnought-shaped model. The lucky ones may have even had their hands on the 'real thing', a Martin Dreadnought. In its centenary year, we celebrate and salute this most iconic of musical instruments.

In preparing for this issue's special feature, a couple of things stood out as being noteworthy. Firstly, a little digging reveals that, at the time of conception, there was no world-conquering strategy, no grand masterplan for the Dreadnought. From today's standpoint and bearing in mind how ubiquitous Dreadnought guitars are worldwide – indeed, I can't think of any manufacturers that don't offer a Dreadnought shape – the Dread's rise to fame has been nothing short of meteoric, not to mention unplanned.

The other aspect of the Martin Dreadnought's history that I find so fascinating is how interweaved the guitar is with the history of modern music. The birth of specific musical genres can be traced back to the effect the Martin Dreadnought had on the creation and production of music. Be it Hank Williams with country, Bill Monroe with bluegrass, Elvis Presley and the Beatles with rock'n'roll or Bob Dylan with folk-rock, the Martin Dreadnought was there, facilitating, inspiring and fashioning. No wonder it's the most copied guitar of all time. No wonder its appeal continues to this day. No wonder luthiers, artists and everyday guitar players alike hold it in such high esteem.

So, from everyone here at *Acoustic*, happy birthday Mrs D. The world of music and musical instruments wouldn't be what it is today without you.

Steve Harvey
Editor



ACOUSTIC *Presents...*

12 TRACKS OF THE MONTH'S BEST NEW ACOUSTIC MUSIC

01

BEARPARK
DISTANT FIELDS

'Distant Fields' is taken from *Wilderness End*, the debut album by Bearpark released in November 2015 on Albino Two Recordings. Bearpark is a new solo project by multi-instrumentalist Nicholas Hirst, who has spent the last few years playing with both Revere and Scottish-born singer-songwriter Kat Flint. He borrowed the name from a village in County Durham, home to his late Grandad. The songs on *Wilderness End* documenting a turbulent decade through the eyes of a rural Essex boy colliding with the glittering noise of London.

- ***http://bearpark.bandcamp.com***
- ***@bearparkband***

05

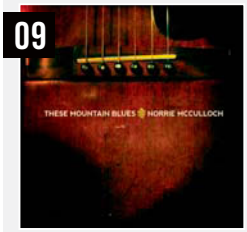
THE BLACK FEATHERS
ALL FOR YOU

The perfectly paired voices of Ray Hughes and Sian Chandler intertwine effortlessly to create a genre-defying sound, combining elements of folk, roots, alt-country and Americana. *Strangers We Meet*, the duo's debut five-track EP, gained national airplay on BBC Radio 2 and warm reviews from national music press, including an interview in *The Sunday Times*. *The Telegraph* listed it as one of the best albums of 2014.

Already a highly regarded and respected duo on the scene, the long-awaited debut album *Soaked To The Bone* is going to catapult them to new heights.

- ***www.theblackfeathers.com***
- ***www.facebook.com/theblackfeathers***
- ***@blackfeathersUK***

09



NORRIE MCCULLOCH
PASS BY MY DOOR

New album *These Mountain Blues* was recorded to analogue tape over three days within a historical 15th century building in Stirling, Scotland and features highly regarded session musicians Dave McGowan (Teenage Fanclub/Belle & Sebastian), Stuart Kidd (Wellgreen/Pearlfishers) & Marco Rea (Wellgreen/Euros Childs band).

"Norrie McCulloch transcends his influences creating some beautiful music which deserves to be heard by all who care about music." Paul Kerr (Blabber n' Smoke).

- ***www.norriemcculloch.com***
- ***www.facebook.com/norriemccullochmusic***
- ***@norriemcculloch***

02

IAN ETHAN CASE
BUTTER II

Boston-based multi-instrumentalist Ian Ethan, best known for his innovative approach to the 18-string acoustic double-neck guitar, has been performing in listening rooms around the country for the past eight years and is increasingly gaining recognition both for his unique instrumental compositions and for the highly original playing methods which are required to perform them.

- ***www.ianethan.com***
- ***www.candyrat.com/artists/ianethancase***
- ***@candyratrecords***

03

ANDREW CLEGG
TIGER AND THE LILY

Andrew Clegg is a unique guitarist who observes traditional guitar while forging a new exciting sound. Blending elements of flamenco, classical and Latin music, Andrew creates a fusion of sound that captures the spirit of the Spanish guitar. Andrew studied the classical guitar, opening up the rich tapestry of the Spanish guitar. It is the combination of the traditional with the contemporary that helped create Andrew's musical voice.

Andrew has released two albums, *Amber* (2010) and *Tiger and the Lily* (2015), and performs around the UK and Europe at festivals and concerts.

- ***www.andrewcleggguitar.co.uk***

04

DAVID BERKELEY
TO THE SEA

US-based cult songwriter and author David Berkeley is back with his finest project yet: his sixth album and second book. The songs on *Cardboard Boat* accompany the stories in his novella *The Free Brontosaurus*. Each song is written and sung from the perspective of the main character of each story.

"An amazingly beautiful collection of tracks," according to *Pop Matters*. Berkeley has been called "a musical poet" by *The San Francisco Chronicle*. And *The New York Times* writes: "Berkeley sings in a lustrous, melancholy voice with shades of Tim Buckley and Nick Drake."

- ***www.davidberkeley.com***
- ***www.facebook.com/davidberkeleymusic***
- ***@davidberkeley***

06

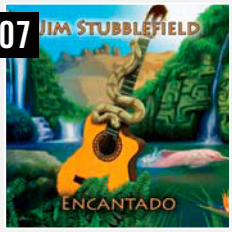
CAM PENNER
HEY YOU! (LOVERS OF MUSIC)

When Canadians Cam Penner and Jon Wood last toured the UK, the reviews were glowing with comments such as "mesmerising," "masterful" and "compelling" being thrown their way. They won major TV exposure when tracks from the sensational *To Build A Fire* album were chosen as the backdrop to the recent BBC 2 TV drama based on Iain Banks' *Stonemouth* novel.

This new album – *Sex & Politics* – finds them adding percussive elements and layered guitar techniques to bolster the texture. It is bigger and brighter, spontaneously grand and fragile at the same time.

- ***www.campenner.com***
- ***www.facebook.com/Cam-Penner-250378223355***

07



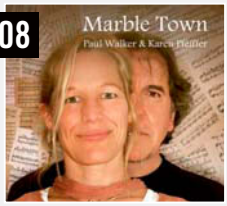
JIM STUBBLEFIELD
PUESTA DEL SOL

Guitarist and composer Jim Stubblefield's most recent release is entitled *Encantado*.

Featuring original compositions highlighting his acoustic and electric guitar prowess, Jim is joined by several world-renowned musicians in an exploration of globe spanning world fusion. In addition to his solo career, Jim is also a founding member of the Billboard Magazine-charting world music group Incendio and he composes music for television and film.

- ***www.guitarraexotica.com***
- ***@jimstubblefield***

08



PAUL WALKER & KAREN PFEIFFER
TEA FOR ONE

Paul Walker from Staffordshire, England and Karen Pfeiffer from Stuttgart, Germany perform at music venues, festivals and theatres throughout the UK, Ireland and Germany. They have been performing together for five years and have just released their second album, *Marble Town*. Describing their diverse musical style isn't always easy but as one German newspaper recently put it 'Songs with groove and goosebumps guaranteed' might be a pretty good start. The new album features a selection of their own eclectic compositions together with unique interpretations of songs by folk icons Richard Thompson, Dougie MacLean, Jimmy MacCarthy and Kieran Halpin.

- ***www.paulwalkermusic.co.uk***
- ***www.facebook.com/paulwalkerandkarenpfeiffer***

10

RICHARD BONNET
DANS L'OEIL DU CYCLOPE

Richard Bonnet is a French avant-garde guitarist from Paris. He has performed with many artists, including Tony Malaby, Tom Rainey, Dominique Pifarély and Hasse Poulsen. With his last CD *Morning Bear*, composed for solo guitar, he explored languages in the 20th century European classical tradition, in addition to the freedom of the blues; the primary concept being to include improvisation as an extended form from the compositions.

- ***www.richardbonnet.fr***
- ***www.facebook.com/richard.bonnet.77***

11

THE WHITE BUFFALO
GO THE DISTANCE

California-bred Jake Smith writes timeless, vividly detailed character studies, tapping into the emotional lives of various misfits, outsiders and troubled souls with insight and compassion. His songwriting is matched by his rough-hewn, deeply expressive voice, and by his distinctive instrumental arrangements, which are simultaneously intimate and epic. This track is off his latest album *Love and the Death of Damnation,* which is available now.

- ***www.earache.com/rocknroll***
- ***www.thewhitebuffalo.com***
- ***www.facebook.com/thewhitebuffalomusic***
- ***@blancobuffalo***

12

ELEANOR MCEVOY
DREAMING OF LEAVING

Irish star Eleanor McEvoy is the platinum and multi award-winning singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist whose song gave a title to Ireland's most successful album, the female compilation, *'A Woman's Heart'*. For her new album *Naked Music,* Eleanor chose to co-write some of the songs with Dave Rotheray, Lloyd Cole and Nat Johnson. Eleanor says of the song 'Dreaming of Leaving', "Lloyd Cole wrote this song with me and he said at the beginning of the writing session, 'There's no point in writing another mediocre song.' I think this is genuinely lovely."

- ***www.eleanormcevoy.com***
- ***@eleanormcevoy***
- ***www.facebook.com/eleanormcevoy***

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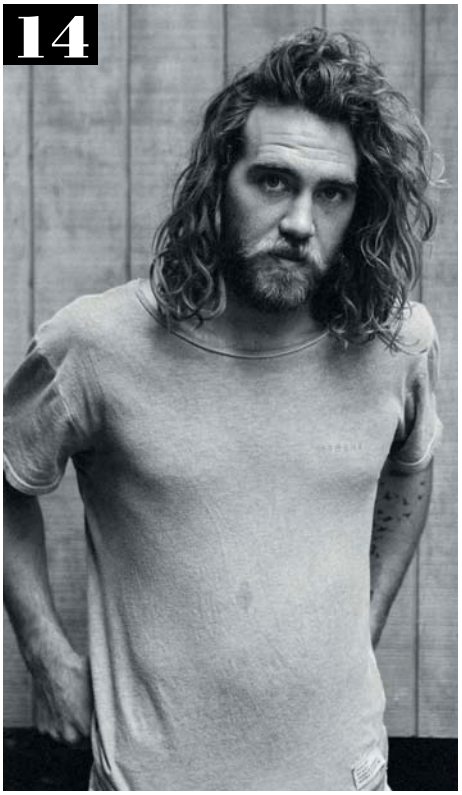

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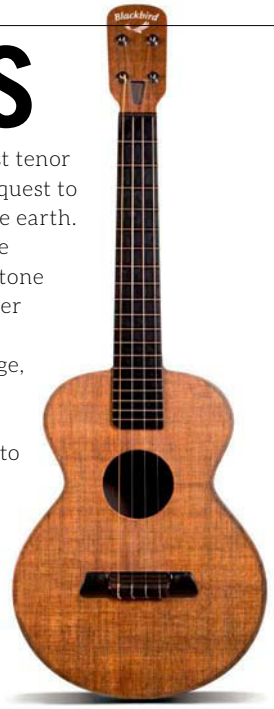


San Francisco guitar-makers Blackbird has launched its first tenor ukulele made of a sustainable linen fabric, in its continued quest to create travel friendly non-wood acoustics that don't cost the earth.

Unveiled for the first time at this year's NAMM show, the Farallon is crafted from Ekoa, a high-performance, natural tone material made of linen fibre and bio-resin pioneered by sister company Lingrove.

The ecological composite is structurally superior to vintage, old-growth wood, and is temperature and humidity stable.

Blackbird's instruments are unaffected by temperature and humidity changes, staying in tune and remaining easy to play for a lifetime..

Blackbird founder Joe Luttwak said: "With Ekoa we wanted to create a naturally derived material that offers more dynamic range than rainforest wood as well as a better player experience with significantly stronger and more stable construction."

Farallon will be available through dealers and in the build-to-order Blackbird custom shop in late spring.

FATHER JOHN MISTY: EXTRA UK DATES

Last year was a phenomenal year for *Acoustic* cover star (and now Brit Award nominee) Father John Misty. His breakthrough second album, *I Love You, Honeybear* graced nearly every best of 2015 list going – scoring pole position on lists from *GQ*, *Loud And Quiet* and *Drowned In Sound*, as well as top-five spots in *Shindig*, *The Guardian*, *Sunday Times*, *Uncut* and on the Rough Trade Shop's roster.

UK fans who were disappointed at having missed out on tickets for the singer's two sold out Roundhouse shows in May, will be pleased to hear that he has announced a third and final performance at Camden's iconic venue on Friday 20 May, alongside other UK tour dates. For more information visit: ***www.fatherjohnmisty.com***

TRUSS ISSUES

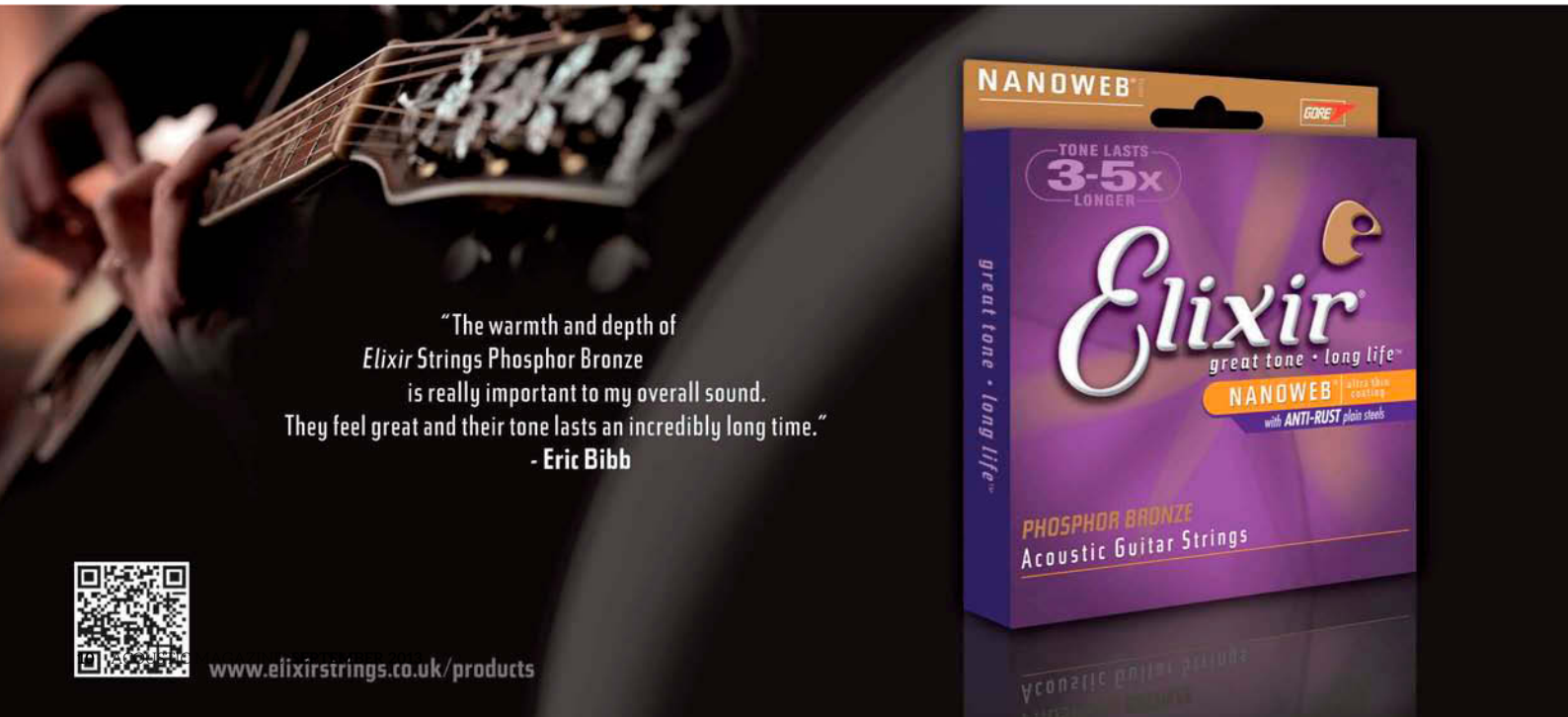
California musicians' tool manufacturer Cruz Tools has revealed its first product aimed exclusively at acoustic guitars – taking aim at the tricky problem of accessing a guitar's truss rod.

With truss rod nuts often located inside the body at the neck's base, normal hex wrenches can become impractical when it comes to making adjustments to an acoustic guitar.

The new GrooveTech Soundhole Wrenches incorporate an extended hex blade for improved access, and a ball-end tip which easily fits into the truss rod nut. Finally, a screwdriver-type handle provides confident adjustment and allows you to avoide damaging the finish of the instrument.

Dan Parks, president of Cruz Tools said: "Our product development has been historically directed at electric guitars and basses. So we felt it was time to address unique problems acoustic players face. Truss rods, which are often the only adjustment on an acoustic guitar, weren't easily handled by standard hex wrenches. We're therefore really happy to introduce these time-saving tools."

For more info visit: ***www.cruztools.com***



LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

German brand Framus has unveiled new additions to its Legacy Acoustic Series. Firstly, the new all-solid Framus Legacy Dreadnoughts are now available in vintage satin natural tinted and vintage high polish natural tinted finishes.

The Framus Legacy Acoustic Jumbo family has also grown. Already available are the new Maple Jumbos (top made of solid spruce, back and sides are made of laminated maple) as well as the Framus Legacy Mahogany Jumbos (top made of solid mahogany, back and sides made of laminated mahogany).

Finally, Framus's powerful new 12-string dreadnoughts feature solid spruce top (back and sides made of laminated mahogany), and as with all the new models, there are options for Fishman electronics, cutaways and finishes.

For more information visit: ***www.framus.de***

MANDOLIN EVENT RESCHEDULED

Acoustic columnist Simon Mayor will hold a mandolin workshop over the Easter weekend (25-27 March) after a previously organised event was postponed.

"The workshop is open to players of all abilities," Simon told us. "I had over 40 mandolinists booked in for the original dates and I'm hoping that most will be able to make it for the new dates, but there are bound to be some that can't, so places should be available. I did the same thing last January and we had a very decent sounding mandolin orchestra by the end of the weekend."

The event, at Halsway Manor near Crowcombe, Somerset, includes a mandolin and voice workshop weekend with Simon Mayor & Hilary James and an evening concert on the Saturday evening, open to the public.

For more information call: ***01984 618274***

JAMIE LAWSON – UK AUTUMN TOUR

Currently mid-way through a sold out UK run of dates, 2015 *Acoustic* cover star, Jamie Lawson has announced a 17 date autumn tour of the UK.

Last year, Jamie was announced as the first signing to Ed Sheeran's own label Gingerbread Man Records. In the whirlwind that followed, Jamie toured with Ed across the world and went from playing to 150 people at London's Barfly to supporting One Direction on their final full UK arena tour. His self-titled album, released in October 2015, reached No 1 in the UK and has sold over 250,000 copies worldwide. For the full list of tour dates, visit:
www.jamielawsonmusic.com/uktour

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POST: Complete the form, below, tear off and send FAO Acoustic Magazine / Manuel Rodriguez comp to Blaze Publishing, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5SZ. Closing date for the Manuel Rodriguez competition is 8 April 2016. The winner will be announced shortly afterwards.

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*Competition entries must arrive no later than the closing date specified. Only the winner will be contacted. One entry per household. Image(s) of winner may be used for future editorial or advertising purposes. The winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries. No cash alternative is offered. *Acoustic* magazine reserves the right to substitute the prize for an alternative of equal or greater value.

ASK THE EXPERTS

THE MUSICIANS' UNION IS HERE TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PRACTICE SPACE

Any musician who has set foot on a stage in the last few decades will doubtless have spent some time in a rehearsal studio. But finding one that suits you and your band's needs requires research. Read our top five tips for finding and making the most of your rehearsal space.

KNOW YOUR OBJECTIVES

Before setting foot in a rehearsal studio, discuss the band's aspirations to ensure you share the same goals. Do you want to go pro? Are you preparing for a tour? It's important to get this out of the way early to make sure you use your rehearsal time well.

There is a legal reason for setting clear goals too. Even if you're an amateur, you may find yourself in a legal partnership. Working with other musicians has legal, tax and other implications, and it is important you protect yourself. MU member? We can advise on protecting you and your assets. Get in touch with your regional office (**theMU.org/contact**).

REVIEW YOUR OPTIONS

When it comes to sourcing a good rehearsal studio, research matters. Ask around for recommendations, dig out reviews, and be sure to visit the premises before parting with any cash. Work out how you are going to pay for it. Check if the studio offers discounts to MU members. And make sure it's convenient and accessible to all members of the band – nothing will sap your will faster than booking a studio hours away from home.

But it's worth remembering that state-of-the-art equipment and dazzling aesthetics do not necessarily mean good rehearsal spaces. "Good facilities make the process more enjoyable," says Paul Gray, MU regional officer for Wales & South West England and former bassist with the Damned and UFO. "That said, I'm currently rehearsing with my band in a garage with curtains pinned to the walls, and that suits us just fine. Remember, the plushest places are not necessarily the most conducive to getting down to work."

SET UP AS IF YOU'RE ON STAGE

Spend time experimenting with the sound levels and positioning of the gear. You want to find the combination that allows everyone in the band to clearly hear what they and the other members are doing. Make note of the equipment positioning and settings for the next time you rehearse.

Paul advises bands who are rehearsing for live work to write a set-list and play through it as if it were a gig, placing all their equipment as they would on the night. Timing the rehearsal is also key, he says, to ensure the set is well timed and evenly-paced.

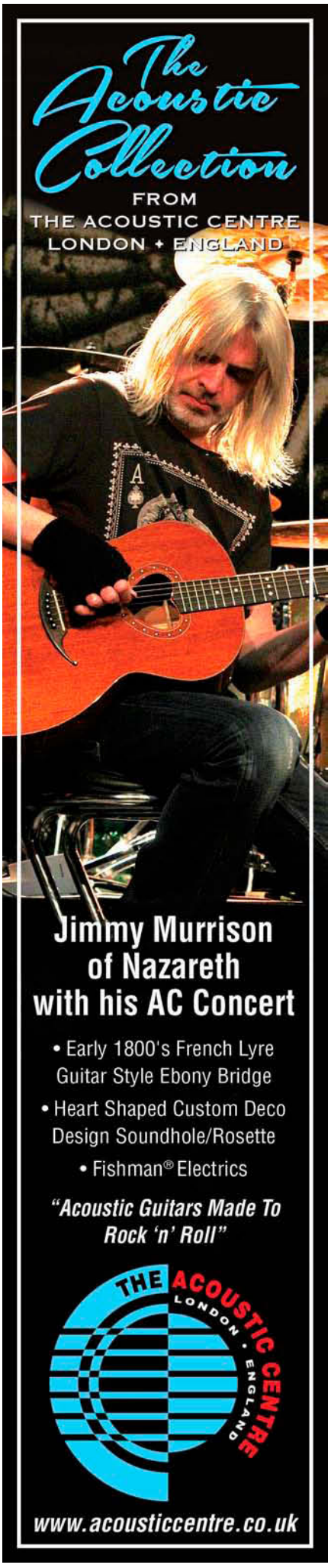
MAKE SURE THERE'S A GOOD PA

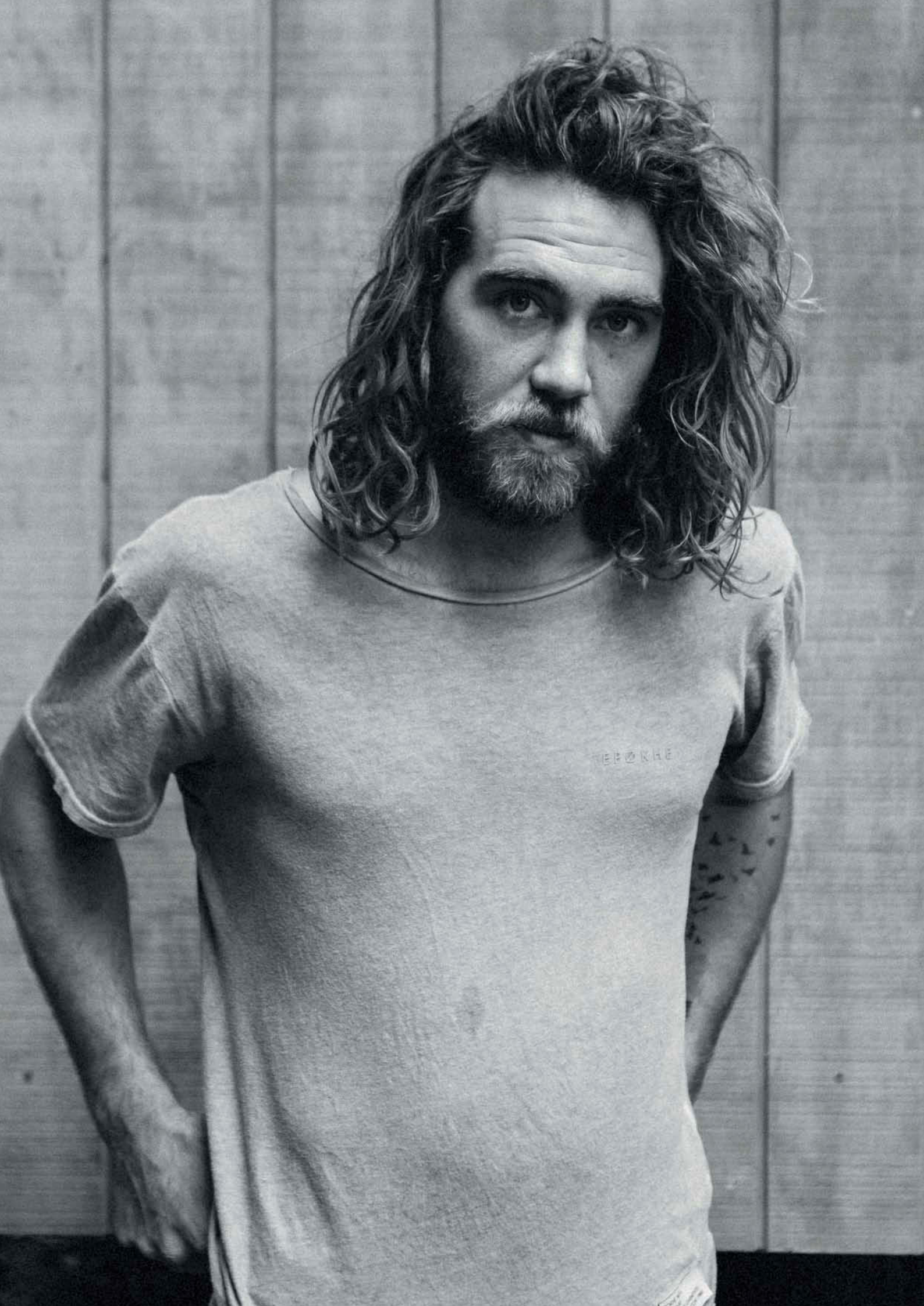
"In 40 years of experiencing the dampest and dankest (with the Damned) to the plushest and most expensive (UFO) practice rooms, I'd say there is one consideration that overrides everything else, and that's the quality of the PA," adds Paul.

"Unless you're working on song structures in advance of a recording session, rehearsals should be used as a way to replicate the sound you individually and collectively intend to make out on stage – so a decent PA that doesn't feedback, with adequate headroom, decent mics and a good mixing desk is paramount."

LOOK AFTER YOUR HEARING

Keep an eye on the volume. Excessive sound levels can do irreversible damage to your hearing, and create friction within your band, so it is vital to keep amps and PA systems at a comfortable level. Use hearing protection – find out more about this and hearing protection services the MU provides members via **theMU.org**. ■





MATT CORBY

The prodigiously gifted musician Matt Corby is about to release Telluric, a startlingly original set of songs that have appeared through some dust and studio rubble. We met when he was back in the hustle and bustle of London to talk at length about this album, music and the power of choice

WORDS: GLENN KIMPTON **IMAGES:** JARRED SENG

Matt Corby's debut album *Telluric* sounds quite unlike anything else, which is a significant achievement these days, especially for a singer as young as he is. It's a melting pot of sounds, rhythms and instruments, put together with the kind of imagination that gets critics crying out 'high art!' Where has this wealth of music come from? "Well I grew up in the church listening to a lot of gospel music," he says, "and I was always trying to emulate those singers. That kind of sound came naturally, because it was music I was exposed to from a really young age, and once you have all of that stuff in you, it's pretty hard to get out."

The gospel side to Matt's sound is never more prominent than on the first unveiled track from the new album, 'Monday'. "Yes, I think so," he agrees. "It's all gospel harmonies and there's not really any instruments other than stomps and claps around that rich vocal layering, so I guess that gives it a really church-esque sound." It's an introduction that immediately gets the ears pricked up, which is what is required on a record that demands to be really listened to with the sort of focus that went into its making. "The music comes from really meticulous care taken at every step of the composition process. I get quite inspired by different instruments in different genres. I mean, you can't get past funk and groove and jazz – it's free music that still has the effect of making your whole body convulse and become a part of it. So, pulling from those influences, I played most of the instruments on this album and when it came to the more harmonic sounds, like the piano and guitar, I wanted to expose the listener to every type of music you could imagine."

Matt comes across as very aware, and he knows that music has broadened in accessibility in recent years, with a wealth being available very easily. "I was introduced to the world digitally as it was progressing, so there was so much music to access," he says and then puffs in slight disbelief. "The kids that are being born now, man, with what's at their fingertips, what they're going to be making in 20 years time will be fucking wild."

If he comes across as being a music veteran in his mid-20s, then it may have something to do with the age the young Matt began his career. "I've actually been a touring musician now for 11 years, which is pretty crazy for a 25 year old," he says. "The main thing I have realised is that if something is going to be good, it's going to take time for it to be understood and digested so it can be regurgitated. I mean, I've experimented a lot with melodies and music, I've just done it real quietly, because I haven't really released that much music, compared to how much I've written and thrown in the bin," he chuckles. "But I think that's fine too, because there is shit-loads of music around. I remember back when people were trying to rush me into doing stuff, and I'd think why would I rush? Momentum and timing

[in releasing albums] is industry jargon and it's absolute rubbish. As long as what you're creating is exactly how you want it to be, somebody will respect it. Well, unless you're insane and you don't know what you're doing, but hopefully that's not me!"

Record labels are not known for their patience when it comes to material released, but Matt seems quite adamant on his values as a musician. "When I signed to Atlantic a couple of years ago," he says, "they were very much like, 'right, great, we're going to do an album immediately!', and I was saying 'hold up guys, I thought we were going to chill it a little first!' So I was quickly forced into this situation and I felt out of my league in a lot of ways. I thought I could just walk in and make stuff up on the spot and nail it without having written anything beforehand, which totally didn't work."

It was a significant episode in Matt's career and an important learning curve. "We all realised that didn't work, so I said I was going to go and spend the time doing what I thought was necessary for me to be able to make a full record, somewhat independently, and get back to them once it was done. And I hadn't spoken to them for about two years until about a week ago, and it was cool! Everyone was fine and they appreciated that I did it that way and they realised I had to go through some embarrassment to get here. They realised that the way it happened was the best thing for everybody involved in the long run."

It was a strong and confident reaction from the young musician, which has paid off on *Telluric*, a well crafted and precise album. We must be thankful he stood his ground, it seems. "I think it's easy to be intimidated as a musician," he responds. "You can be overwhelmed by knowing that there are so many people giving it a red hot crack, and when you do get signed, there are many people who assume a position of power and change things where it doesn't need changing, until it can become ridiculous. Often they are just following formulas and trends and just guessing. I'd rather hedge bets on my creative guessing than on somebody who doesn't know how to do it." It's fighting talk from Matt, but you can't help thinking that it is in some part intrinsic to his success as a bold modern avant-garde musician. "I just think, because I've been in the industry for a long time," he says, "I'm not as easy to intimidate. So my stance was that I'm going to go off and do this and there's nothing you can do about it." He pauses a moment, before adding, "and if you do decide to drop me, then that's cool too, I guess."

Matt wasn't dropped, and his new album is ready, so how did it finally take shape and what was the objective behind it? "I wanted it to feel good and I wanted it to lyrically be close to how I see things, no matter how simple. Some of the words on there are really simple. There's one song called 'We Could Be Friends', and that is the chorus, because I was on mushrooms when I wrote it and that was literally all I could think of! But, really, I wanted it to be fun, because I've made a lot of serious music in the past and I've tried to portray this brooding kid that could sing and that was exactly how the scrapped album sounded. Like a 40-year-old dude singing about my woes, when I was a 20-year-old guy making that kind of music. I knew there was more energy to me than that."

Energy is what *Telluric* seems to be all about; it's a record full of surprises – intricate and clear at the same time. "I tried to extend all of the melodic phrases as long as possible on the album," he continues, "to create this melodic story to each song, so it's not repetition the whole time. But really, what I wanted was to make something that made people feel good and if I felt good once the song was finished then hopefully there was a chance it would work!"

To steer Matt toward some gear chat, I started talking about song composition and recording methods. "Well, often I'll just be walking around and whistling," he replies, "because you can easily find all sorts of melodies when you're whistling. Or some days I'll just get straight on the kit and be like [crazy beat-boxing drumming sounds], and then I'll superimpose as many melodies as I can and find the ones that work in the mix. That was pretty much how every song was created, with some strange chord progressions later in the day."

And what fine stringed instruments were on hand to provide for the songs? "Ah yeah," he laughs, "I have a Guild T 50 thin hollow body semi-acoustic, I think it's a '75, and most of the lines on the record were played on that. In fact, I ran some of the vocals through that guitar too, because the pickup on there is so hot you can sing into it and use all of your guitar effects and it sounds really cool. It's a pretty magical device, man! The album isn't really guitar music, so I've really used it to add rhythm and flourishes to the songs. I wanted it to add something to the stories, without it being completely chordal. The guitar is an amazing instrument, but part of me thinks that the guys fucking nailed it back in the 60s! I still love it though." ■

Telluric is out in 11 March on Atlantic.
Matt Corby will also be touring the UK in March.
www.mattcorby.com.au

Speech impaired

and completely

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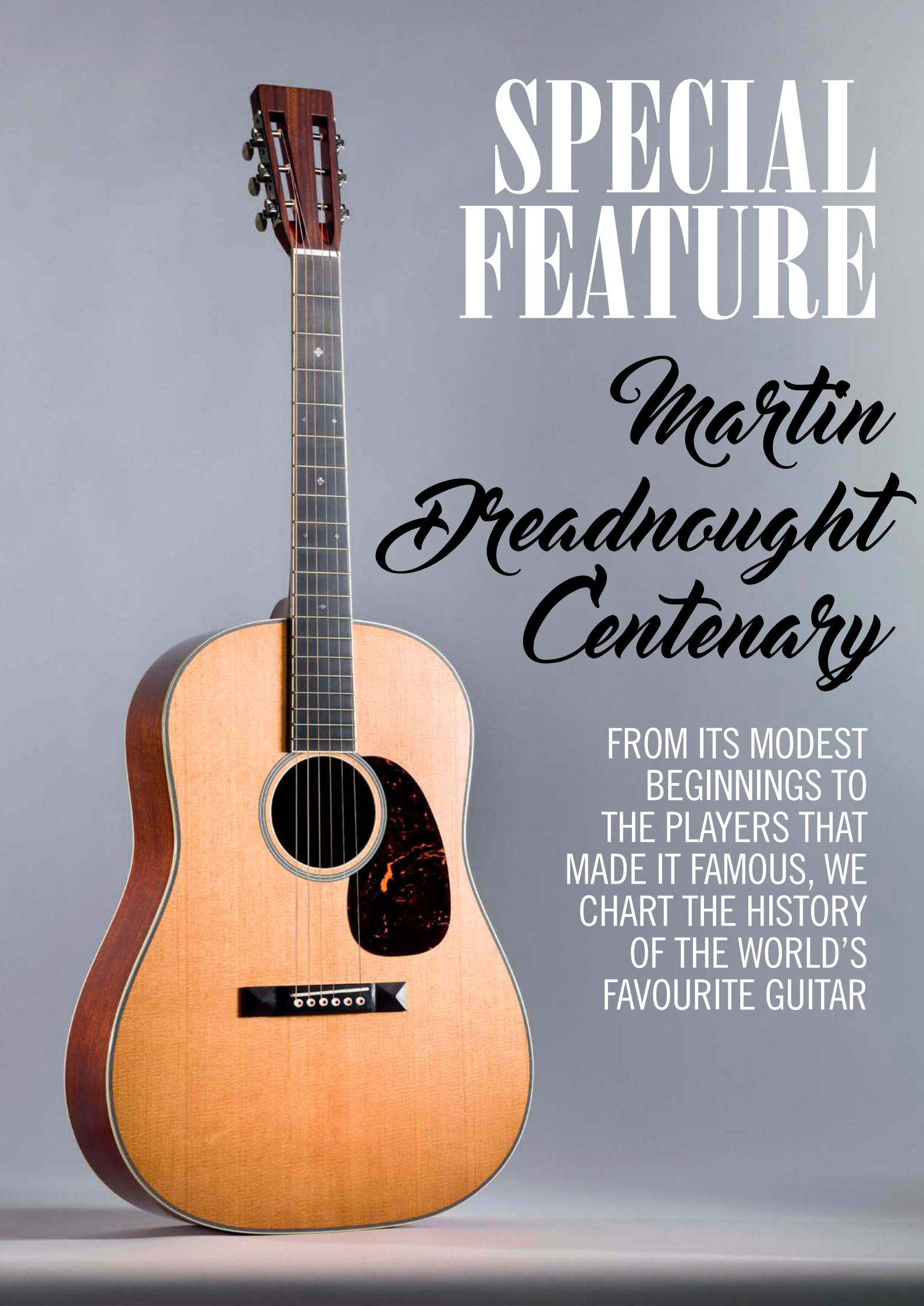

SPECIAL FEATURE

Martin Dreadnought Centenary

FROM ITS MODEST BEGINNINGS TO THE PLAYERS THAT MADE IT FAMOUS, WE CHART THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE GUITAR

Mister Martin

Where better to start this special feature than with the man whose family name is on the headstock of every Martin guitar, Chris Martin IV, who tells Steve Harvey about the evolution and success of the Dreadnought, and his true feelings on the plethora of Dreadnought copies out there

WORDS: STEVE HARVEY **IMAGES PROVIDED BY:** CF MARTIN & CO.

Christian Frederick Martin IV, the great-great-great grandson of the original Christian Frederick Martin, is Martin Guitar's chairman and CEO. Despite his family being an intrinsic part of the production of popular music for the last century, and arguably responsible for the creation of some musical genres, he remains eminently approachable and easy to talk to.

As you can understand, Chris Martin loves talking about his company's history, particularly the early models of Martin guitars. After expressing his pride at the Dreadnought's 100th birthday, he reflected on a conversation he had with his grandfather. "He told me that his father, my great grandfather, loved history and that's why that particular guitar is called the Dreadnought. As my grandfather is no longer alive, I felt the need to learn more about the ship itself."

Having immersed himself in research material, Mr Martin became more familiar with the Dreadnought battleship (*pictured above*). "What struck me was that not only is 2016 the 100th anniversary of the Dreadnought guitar, but it's also the 110th

Martin & Co.
EST. 1833

anniversary of the ship," he said. "So I began to do a lot of research on the ship and learned that it was such a masterpiece of naval engineering, to the point where it was so state of the art in so many ways, it made all previous battleships, including the entire British fleet, obsolete. I began to see more of a connection between not only the word, but the item behind the word."

You'd be forgiven for thinking that that Martin Dreadnought was designed with the sole purpose of becoming the world's favourite guitar. Mr Martin reminds us that there was no such masterplan. "When you look at the Martin Dreadnought, in hindsight it was revolutionary, but they didn't sit down in a room and say, 'Let's design a revolutionary guitar'. They designed a big-bodied guitar which we believe might have originally been made for Hawaiian music, but which very quickly became the go-to guitar for country, then bluegrass, then folk. And, as it's been said many times, it has now become the most copied guitar of all time. That's pretty impressive to me."

We ask Mr Martin about the Dreadnought's formative years. "There is a resurgent interest in small-bodied Martins, and that warms our hearts, but when you look at anything we made prior to the Dreadnought, they got bigger – but they got bigger in proportion. The goal was to not have the bass, or the mid-range, or the treble outshine any of the other two. That's why when you look at the 0, the 00 or the 000, you can see they've got bigger, but you can still see the family resemblance in them. Then, along comes the Dreadnought, which was originally promoted by us as a bass guitar. Why? Not because it had four strings, but because it had bass – more bass than anything we've ever made!

"The original Dreadnoughts were only sold through the Ditson chain, which meant that they hadn't got the broad distribution that other Martin guitars had enjoyed. During the Great Depression, Ditson went bust and of all the models we were making for them the Dreadnought was the only one we kept, but we knew that we had to develop the guitar. Very shortly after that we offered a 14-fret to the body model, and then a solid headstock and scalloped bracing. That's when it became the modern Martin Dreadnought."

"The herringbone trim and scalloped bracing both went away during the war. We're not exactly sure why the scalloped bracing went. It might have had something to do with some warranty issues, we're not sure, but we know the herringbone went away because it was sourced in Germany. It wasn't until the 1960s that people began to say that those scalloped-braced Martin Dreadnoughts had 'a sound'. So, it was a combination of the solid head, the 14-fret neck and the scalloped bracing, all of which happened in a kind of sequence, that solidified the Dreadnought's place as a guitar that had potential to be relevant far into the future."

Chris Martin IV with a limited edition 222 Anniversary Dreadnought

The Dreadnought's place in instrument history and popular music may have been assured, but sales reports for the first few years wouldn't have led you to that conclusion. "The Dreadnought certainly wasn't an overnight success," states Mr Martin. "It took years and years before it became the bread and butter guitar. Throughout the teens and twenties, the bulk of our production was small bodied guitars. Looking back, it wasn't until after the second world war that it came on strong. We made some Dreadnoughts in the run-up to the second world war, and a few during the war, but it was afterwards that people really began to desire the Dreadnought."

"Of course, back in the day, it was all acoustic. The microphone came along later and, much later, the pick-up so the Dreadnought proved itself acoustically before it proved itself as an acoustic-electric guitar."

One of the truly remarkable features of the Dreadnought is that it is used by artists from many different musical genres. We ask Mr Martin if he can put his finger on what it is that causes the Dreadnought to have such universal appeal.

"It has an impressive sound, an impressive look, and you feel like you're getting good value for money," he says with utter confidence. "It has a presence about it, without being gaudy. When you see a band and the guitarist is holding a Martin Dreadnought, you say to yourself, 'OK, this person is going to entertain me. I think I'm in for a treat here.' Had it sounded good but looked bad I don't think it would have been as popular. And likewise, had it looked good but

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Dreadnought player Toby Stroud with his D-45

not sounded good. It was the combination of the two things."

As has been well-documented, the Martin Dreadnought is the most copied acoustic guitar in production today. When interviewing Mr Martin in 2008 he reminded me that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. However, I put it to him that maybe there is a tinge of regret that the design was never patented. "Looking back, I don't believe there was ever any work done in protecting the design. If they contemplated it, that's all they did. And don't forget that design patents are hard to get. It's easy to get a patent on how something functions, but not so much on how it looks. Even if they had been able to secure that patent, it would have ran out long ago. The one thing we protect vigorously is the Martin brand, but by not protecting the Dreadnought, I believe that allowed it to become what it was destined to become. Without us either encouraging it or discouraging it, the marketplace said, this is possibly the finest design of flat top steel string acoustic guitar ever for the purpose of being in a band and being able to cut through and keep up with the other instruments."

We ask Mr Martin to expand on the issues surrounding patents. "Maybe the Dreadnought design is something we should have tried to register, but we didn't. It's too late now but not that many years ago, at the Patent & Trademark Office in New York, we were able to get protection for the rectangular headstock and for the D-18, D-28 and D-45 model designation, many, many years after we had used them. I thought to myself at the time that there must have been someone working in that office that, when they saw the paperwork, thought, 'Yes, Martin deserves to have these registered'. As a result, a guitar builder cannot use D-18, D-28 or D-45. Protecting the rectangular headstock is more of a challenge because, in the interim, other people were using it. Where that's the case we've made contact and told them we don't want to stop you, we don't want a royalty, we just want you to acknowledge in your literature that you are using a headstock shape that is rightfully owned by C.F. Martin & Co. Some have complied and some have thumbed their noses at us. Whatever the case, this industry is too small to be suing people all the time. It's not part of the DNA of guitar builders in general, they are more into sharing than hiding things."

"The biggest kick I get is when I see the expensive copies. We don't make guitars in China so if someone wants to start out with a £199 guitar, you're going to get something from Asia and God bless you. But I do have to laugh when people boast about their expensive Collings, or whatever it might be. I ask, 'Hey, what shape is it?' 'It's a Dreadnought', they reply. 'And how much did you pay for it?' '$6,000', they tell me. 'So you paid $6,000 for a Martin copy? Good for you! You know, we still make the real thing?' Don't get me wrong, I like Bill Collings, but that's where I scratch my head a little bit."

With the Dreadnought having enjoyed such success, we ask Mr Martin if the Dreadnought can be improved. "What we will continue to do is refine the Dreadnought in terms of playability. There are necks that we use today that players years ago wish they would have had access to. Let's face it, for many years, Martin guitars had big, clunky necks which people played on the first three frets. Had we not evolved the Dreadnought's neck, it might not be as relevant as it is today."

"We're also going to continue to work with folks like Fishman to refine the acoustic electric sound. When you plug a Martin in, what I hope you hear is that same guitar, just louder. Larry [Fishman, President of Fishman Electronics] and his team are sharp and every time we do something we get closer to that goal."

The size of the Dreadnought's body means that, for some, the guitar can be somewhat cumbersome. When commenting on this, Mr Martin used the opportunity for a little sales pitch. "Yes, they are a little awkward, they're not couch guitars. That's why, if you're really into acoustic guitars, it's probably a good idea to have a Dreadnought and a 00 or 000 depending on your mood."

In summary, Mr Martin is clear about his company's position in the market and the positive effect his competitors have. "We've got some formidable competition but we're number one, and I want to stay number one. Competition has been good for the industry. Guitars today are better because everyone had to make a better guitar and if you weren't inclined to make a better guitar, you'd better get out of the way." ■

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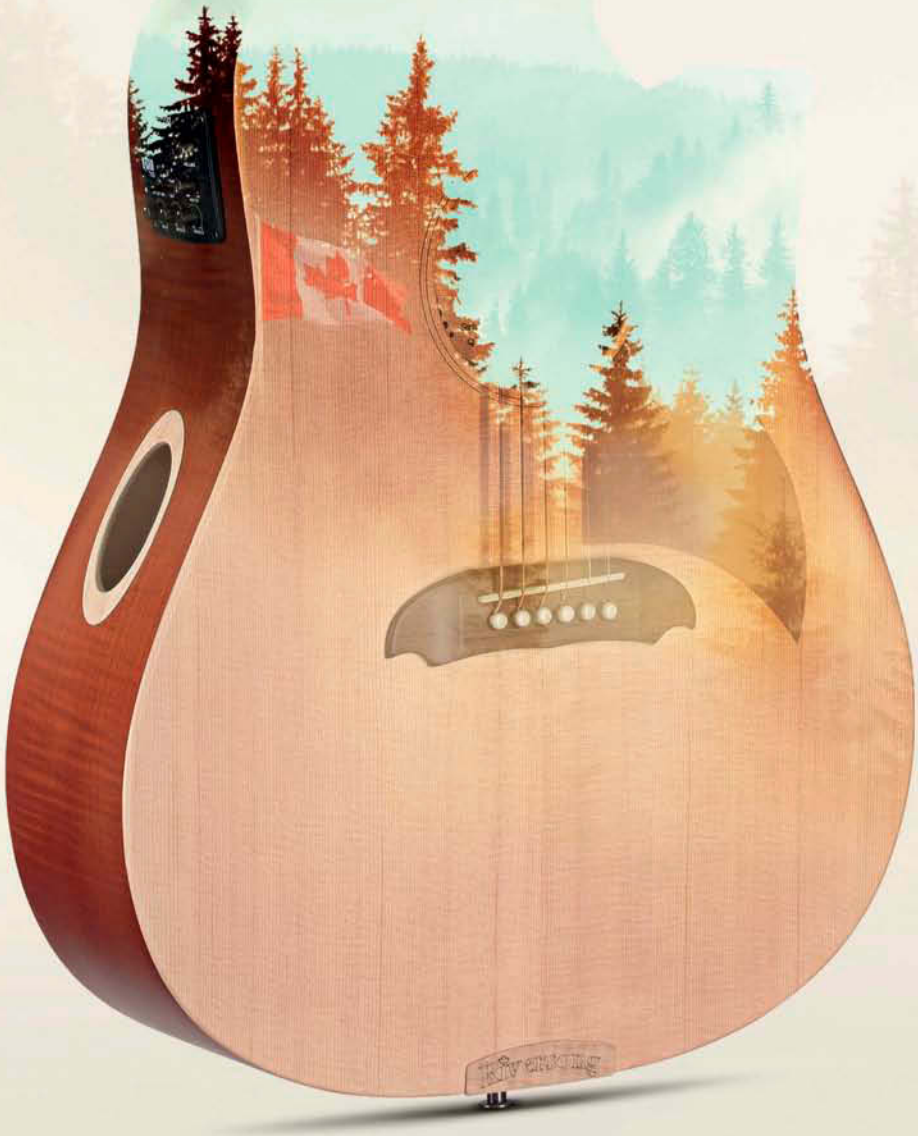

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Martin Guitars' archivist, Dick Boak, with a limited edition slope-shouldered Dreadnought

The Man With a Plan

During his 40 years with C. F. Martin & Co, Dick Boak has served the company as luthier, director of artist relations, archivist and historian. As such, nobody is better placed to discuss the birth, development and success of the Martin Dreadnought

WORDS: STEVE HARVEY **IMAGES PROVIDED BY:** CF MARTIN & CO.

For many, Dick Boak is as intrinsically linked with Martin Guitars as the Martin family themselves. Having worked for the company for 40 years, Boak has been personally involved in over 150 signature models, limited run and special edition guitars. He is a master luthier and incredibly knowledgeable concerning tonewoods and guitar construction. Such is his experience and expertise that it is impossible to have a conversation about acoustic guitars with Boak and not learn something new.

Our interview with Boak started with a request for him to express his overriding feelings at seeing the Dreadnought turn 100. "Chris Martin's father used to say that the Dreadnought is 'The girl that brought us to the dance'," reflects Boak. "The Dreadnought is so intertwined with Martin's success. When I started with the company in 1976, Dreadnoughts completely dominated our sales and it seemed that everybody was playing one."

The story concerning how the Dreadnought came into existence is fascinating. It might sound a little tactless to say, but the Dreadnought was a bit of an accident in that there was no masterplan. In fact, if it wasn't for a certain Hawaiian guitarist, there might never have been a Dreadnought. Boak explains, "In 1915 there was an exposition in San Francisco called Panama Pacific. This was a huge world's fair. They had a Hawaiian exhibit there of ukuleles and slide guitars and they had a band called the Royal Hawaiians who performed for the exposition and became immensely popular. After the exposition they went on a national tour of the United States and Hawaiian music swept through the country virally, taking over America."

"Major Kealakai was the head of the band and he started to correspond with Ditson about getting a larger guitar for his performances because he couldn't produce enough volume for the larger audiences that were now attending their shows. He ordered a guitar from what was, at the time, our biggest customer, Ditson. The guitar arrived. It was good but not big enough, so he ordered a second, bigger guitar. In effect, that second guitar had the height and width of a Dreadnought, but it had a tight waist like a 000. Otherwise the pattern was identical to a Dreadnought guitar. So, in many respects, Major Kealakai of the Royal Hawaiian Band was the person responsible for increasing the size of a guitar to Dreadnought dimensions and within six months of his guitar being made, the formalised pattern for the Dreadnought guitar was solidified, being more pear-shaped. Ditson began ordering from Martin under the Ditson brand. So the very first guitar that Ditson ordered in that size was the 222 which is what we're basing our anniversary model on."

From his unique vantage point, we ask Boak why he felt the Dreadnought has been so successful. "The most important factor was the birth and development of the recording industry and the use of microphones in stage performances," says Boak. "The notion that guitars had been used for little performances in the parlour of the home was rendered obsolete and was gradually being replaced by stage performances with microphones and larger audiences. The only way to be heard

A Martin man through and through: Dick Boak performing

was to have a loud instrument. The guitar had already grown in size tremendously in an effort to try and compete with the brashness of the banjo, but with stage performances and larger audiences, there was a critical need for a guitar with stage-power.

By the time the early 1930s rolled around with stage performances like the Grand 'Ole Opry and the other country music performances, they demanded a guitar that had the power to deliver to a microphone and to an audience."

One of the keys to the Dreadnought is how multi-genre the guitar is. Dreadnought players can be found in country, bluegrass, folk and radio-friendly soft rock. "I'm not sure that those styles of music were so delineated back then," says Boak. "Back in the 1930s those styles of music might have been lumped together, and Jimmie Rodgers played a big part in this. Being a railroad man and one of the first recording artists in America, he travelled far and wide around the US. Everywhere he went he picked up folk, blues and country influences and brought them all together into a 12-bar format. I always think it's important to mention Jimmie Rodgers because he played such an important role in the development and history of the Dreadnought. Rodgers was a major influence on Gene Autry."

Of course, anyone familiar with the history of Martin Guitars, and in particular the Dreadnought, will be aware of the pivotal role Gene Autry played in the successes enjoyed. "Aside from being the first person to ever order a D-45," says Boak, "he was tremendously influential on a whole generation of emerging guitarists including Hank Williams and Elvis Presley."

When asked if there were other artists pivotal to the Dreadnought's ubiquity, Boak points to perhaps a lesser known act. "Probably most significant for Martin would be the Kingston Trio. They were behind the folk music boom of the late 1950s and early 1960s." Why so successful? "They recorded music that was simple," responds Boak. "If you knew just a couple of chords, you could play Kingston Trio music. They made music accessible to the masses, specifically college students who went out and brought Martin Dreadnoughts en masse. As a result, almost every college across the United States had, not one or two, but many Kingston Trio bands. They were such a phenomenon that Martin D-28s were back-ordered for almost four years."

Having discussed artists pivotal to the early triumphs of the Dreadnought, the conversation turns to noteworthy construction developments. As Boak explains, the abundance of mahogany in the late 1920s and early 1930s was significant. "The early Dreadnoughts were all made with mahogany back and sides and Adirondack spruce for the top. They were very lightweight and, as mahogany guitars, had a beautiful breathy, crystalline, glassine treble response, with a clear bass, not a thick bass. Ditson probably chose mahogany because the wood was readily available, and they could offer them at a lower price point – remembering the very difficult economic conditions at the time, particularly during the depression. Those guitars are remarkable for their clarity."

"Ditson didn't survive the depression and when they went out of business in 1931, Martin took the designs and patterns that they had developed in conjunction with Ditson and prototyped D-1 and D-2 models. These guitars were really to satisfy the orders for The Chicago Music Company, so the first formal Martin Dreadnoughts were shipped to Chicago with the stamp, 'Made Exclusively For The Chicago Musical Instrument Company'. Shortly

The popularity of the Royal Hawaiians swept across America, and it was group leader Major Kealakai (pictured, left) who, by requesting a larger-bodied guitar, kickstarted the Dreadnought design

after the D-1 and D-2 prototypes, the D-1 became the D-18 model and the D-2 became the D-28."

Up until this time, Martin Dreadnoughts were offered only as 12-fret models. However in 1934 Martin designed a 14-fret model. "It all started with Perry Bechtel from Atlanta – probably the best banjo player in the United States at the time. He came to Martin in 1929 wanting increased access to the higher registers. Playing banjo, he was used to being able to play up to two octaves on one string. But, as the banjo began to wane in popularity, he was being asked to play more acoustic guitar and he was frustrated by bumping into the body at the 12th fret. Originally, he asked for 15 frets but, after laying out designs on paper, Martin agreed to make him a 14-fret guitar in 000 size. They lengthened the scale length and this became the OM-28 and subsequently the OM-45 and OM-45 Deluxe. In 1930 this was a huge deal, and within about five years most of the Martin models, including the Dreadnought, were offered as a 14-fret 'Orchestra' model or 'OM Option' as it was known. Gradually the 14-fret models overtook the 12-fret models."

In discussing 12- and 14-fret models, we ask Boak if he felt there were tonal differences between the two. "I think so", he responds without hesitation, before adding, "I think the 12-fret models have a hollowness and depth of tone that feels like it's coming from behind you. I usually say it sounds like you're playing guitar in the shower. The 12-fret models are extremely pleasant for fingerstyle playing, but aren't great for rhythm guitar. They are so responsive that, when you play them as a rhythm guitar with chords, they over-perform and 'bark' or distort."

"There's also a tonal advantage to the slotted headstock because of the increased angle of the strings across the nut. That creates a unique neck resonance that adds a sweetness to the tone."

Having spent much time looking back at the Dreadnought's heritage, we ask Boak what the future holds for the model. "I like to try new things but I'm always a little sceptical on whether you can improve on, or add to the tonal palette, in a viable way because so much has already been done. But I have to say that the little Dreadnought Junior is pretty remarkable. I actually experimented with this idea some 35 years ago. I was draughtsman at the time and thought it would be fun to multiply all the dimensions of the Dreadnought by 7/8 and shrink the guitar down to see what it yielded. That project led to several good 7/8-sized models, but this new Junior is well-designed, it's lightweight, has a great tone and is fun to play."

In providing evidence of his insatiable desire for tone, Boak gives an insight into his mindset. "We've been constantly looking over our shoulder at the past to try and glean the elements of construction that contribute small increments to great tone. The Authentic series recreates the early Dreadnoughts from the 1930s and 40s and they are very special. The use of hide glue, the thin finish, the hand-construction, the tucking of the bracing – when you add all those incremental attributes up it really does contribute to a great tone. In chasing tone you have to employ as many things as possible."

"There was a scientist named Dr Michael Kasha who said that the human ear was incapable of discerning improvements in tone without a 17 per cent improvement or better. He also said that no single element of the guitar could be improved upon that much, you'd have to combine many different elements to achieve the 17 percent gain. I look at it as simply trying to optimise every element of the instrument." ■

A 1929 Ditson 111 Dreadnought

In the Beginning

Steve Harvey looks back at the history and development of what is the most popular acoustic body shape of all time: the Dreadnought

WORDS: STEVE HARVEY **IMAGES:** CF MARTIN & CO.

It is the most played, commercially successful and copied acoustic guitar body shape of all time. Some of the world's most famous and celebrated artists have owned and played them. They've been the six-stringed canvasses upon which many cherished and memorable songs have begun life. As part of this special feature on the Martin Dreadnought, we raise a glass to their most successful model, and look back at how it all began.

In the early 1900s, C. F. Martin & Co was in the hands of Frank Henry Martin, a man widely credited as being the innovation behind many Martin designs. He was the grandson of C. F. Martin Sr, the company's founder almost 100 years prior. The company had recently taken the bold and ambitious step of self-distributing their instruments direct from the factory in Nazereth; something it continues to do to this day.

The Dreadnought's story begins with Harry Hunt (*pictured, right*) in 1916. Hunt was the manager of the Oliver Ditson & Co music store in Boston. Ditson's were a significant retail partner of C.F. Martin's, and it was Hunt who first suggested to Martin an all new model which was to be of much larger proportion than any other acoustic guitar then available.

America's musical landscape at the time was largely shaped by country music. Martin's 00 and 000 body shapes were excellent guitars and suitable for solitary use, but they lacked the bass and overall volume needed to match banjos, fiddles and vocals. Hunt's suggestions found a listening ear and later that year, the first Oliver Ditson Dreadnoughts were available.

The Dreadnought name itself came from the Royal Navy, who in 1906 had launched a battleship considerably larger than any other in service. Its designers were so confident in the ship's abilities and its comparably larger

proportions that they named the vessel HMS Dreadnought, literally meaning, having nothing to fear.

The HMS Dreadnought was massively influential and was a pivotal point in naval architecture. Ships built prior to its launch began to be referred to as pre-Dreadnought, and those built after, post-Dreadnought.

Frank Martin and Harry Hunt, recognising a perfect marketing tie-in, 'borrowed' the name Dreadnought for their new project. Its greater volume and louder, fuller bass was intended to make the guitar a more suitable component for ensemble settings as well as a better match for accompanying singers.

The first Dreadnoughts were sold throughout Boston and New York under the brand name Oliver Ditson and used Ditson's own numbering system rather than Martin serial numbers. The Ditson Dreadnoughts had 12 frets to the body, mahogany back and sides, spruce tops and slotted peg heads. Despite its fearsome name, the early life of the Dreadnought was not without problems. Ironically, traditional Martin Customers felt that it was too loud and bassy. Their preference was for the more balanced and rounded tone of the 0, 00 and 000 guitars.

The Dreadnought's formative years were shaky at best, as recognised by Fred Martin (C.F. III) who is on record as saying, "The Dreadnought guitar was not an overnight sensation."

Although poorly received at first, the Dreadnought remained part of the Oliver Ditson catalogue until the late 1920s when, due to the economic climate of the era, Oliver Ditson & Co went bust and ceased trading. In recent times, in an effort to point back to its early years, Martin has added a Ditson Dreadnought to the catalogue; a slope shouldered model with vintage appointments.

For a year or two following Ditson's demise the existence of the Dreadnought was under threat. That was until a chance request from, of all people, a banjoist by the name of Perry Bechtel. The request came about because banjo players who also played guitar were left frustrated at the lack of access to the higher register. He approached Henry Martin suggesting that they should consider 14 fret to the body models. Two extra available frets might not seem like much, but in the context of Martin's tradition, this amounted to a revolution. Ever the innovator and keen to revive the fortunes of the Dreadnought, Henry Martin relaunched it in 1931. Martin accommodated the 14-fret neck by shortening and squaring-off the body. The new models were designated the D-1 and D-2 (which later because the D-18 and D-28). Both models carried the Martin name and logo, and, for the first time, Martin serial numbers. Although there were some early Martin 12-fret Dreadnoughts, 14-fret models

were soon released. Scalloped bracing and a solid headstock were also feature additions, and thus, after an unsteady infancy, Martin had produced what is arguably still the most popular style of steel string guitar: the 14-fret Dreadnought.

In 1935, a D-18 (seen used in the picture above) cost $65 and a D-28 $100 – both prices being $10 more than their 000 equivalents. However, fuelled by the growing popularity of folk and country music, the Dreadnought quickly went on to become Martin's best-selling guitar.

The Dreadnought's profile has been helped along the way by some high profile users. Perhaps foremost among these is Gene Autry of Oklahoma; a singing cowboy of the big screen who beat up the baddies, grabbed the girl and rode off into the sunset upon his trusty steed. Autry knew Frank Henry Martin and his son, C.F. Martin III, personally and is recorded as purchasing the first D-45 ever produced. Autry's recording of the song 'That Silver Haired Daddy Of Mine' was a massive hit and, as befitted a major star, he ordered the biggest, fanciest Martin he could buy. Its serial number is 53177 and Martin records show that it was ordered in 1933 from the Chicago Musical Instrument Co., a major distributor of musical instruments. With all of its fanciful abalone pearl body decoration, the guitar proved to be expensive, a whopping $200 – no small sum in the middle of the depression!

Autry had his name inlaid in pearl script on the fingerboard. The exposure that Autry gave to Martin and, in particular, the Martin Dreadnought cannot be overemphasised. Dick Boak, Martin's former director of artist and limited editions, has said that Autry's original 1933 D-45 is probably the most valuable and collectable guitar on the market today.

The Dreadnought is often referred to as being a musical icon and part of the history of American music. This is because the Martin Dreadnought features at pivotal points throughout the development of American musical genres. The catalyst for this was the Dreadnought's volume and projection, which pushed the guitar further forward on stage, literally speaking. Up until this point, guitars were used predominately for accompaniment. Backed by the tonal muscle of the Dreadnought, players began stepping forward to take solos and riff work.

In the years since Autry was seen on screen playing a Dreadnought, countless artists have joined the ranks of the Dreadnought users. Hank Williams, who is widely credited as the founding father of country music played a Dreadnought. Following on from Williams, Del McCory played a Dreadnought with Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass. In 1964, a fresh-faced Elvis famously recorded 'That's Alright Mama' on a 1942 D-18 at Sun Studios, arguably launching rock'n'roll. Johnny Cash's primary stage guitar was a D-35 – finished, of course, in black.

In New York's Greenwich Village, a young artist by the name of Bob Dylan began blending folk and rock influences to create an all-new genre, again with the help of his Martin Dreadnought. Then, along came Woodstock where Martin Dreadnoughts were played on stage by most acoustic artists. Serial Martin collector, Don McLean, wrote 'American Pie' on a Martin Dreadnought. McCartney reportedly wrote 'Blackbird' on a Martin Dreadnought and is seen playing one in the *Let It Be* film.

By the 1980s the music scene was very different. Synthesizers and keyboards had taken over, with a wealth of bands roughly grouped together under the 'New Romantics' banner. Fortunately for us all, along came the Unplugged series which more often than not featured Martin Dreadnoughts. The popularity of that series of concerts and the accompanying CDs and DVDs led a whole new generation of artists and listeners rediscovering the roots of American music.

The list goes on, as does the Dreadnought's influence on the modern acoustic guitar market. There can hardly be a single manufacturer or luthier of acoustic guitars that doesn't offer a Dreadnought shape, not just because it is so tonally capable, but also because it's considered to be the industry standard acoustic shape. Little wonder the current Mr. Martin (Chris Martin IV) says, "No matter what it's made of, or how well it's made, if you buy a Dreadnought that's not a Martin, you're buying a copy."

It is also fitting that in 2004 when the Martin Guitar Company produced its millionth guitar, it was a Dreadnought.

Clearly, when it was first conceived and produced, there was no overarching master plan. Martin didn't anticipate it would become their most popular model, let alone the whole world's. Yet 100 years since it was first seen, its place in the annals of guitar history is assured. What started out being a simple oversized guitar, ended up being a musical icon ■

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13 The Stables - MILTON KEYNES
17 Ramsbottom Cricket Club - BURY
18 Greystones - SHEFFIELD
27 The Ent Shed - BEDFORD

MARCH
2 Bedford's Bar - NORWICH
3 The Half Moon - BISHOPS STORTFORD
5 Salisbury Arts Centre - SALISBURY
5 Bath Chapel Arts - BATH
12 Joules Yard - MARKET HARBOROUGH
18 The Bullingdon - OXFORD
19 Norden Farm Arts Centre - MAIDENHEAD

APRIL
2 Mary Agate Village Hall - SALFORD
8 The Kings Head - CIRENCESTER
9 The Convent - STROUD
23 The Garden House - HOLBEACH HURN
24 Cookley Village Hall - COOKLEY

MAY
5 The Green Note - LONDON
7 Cambridge Junction - CAMBRIDGE
13 Kontra Roots Club - FINEDON
28 Cranleigh Arts Centre - CRANLEIGH
29 The Hawth Theatre - CRAWLEY

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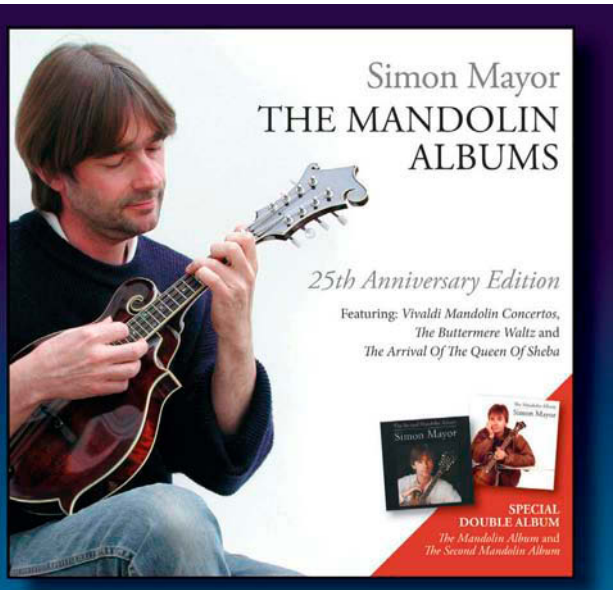
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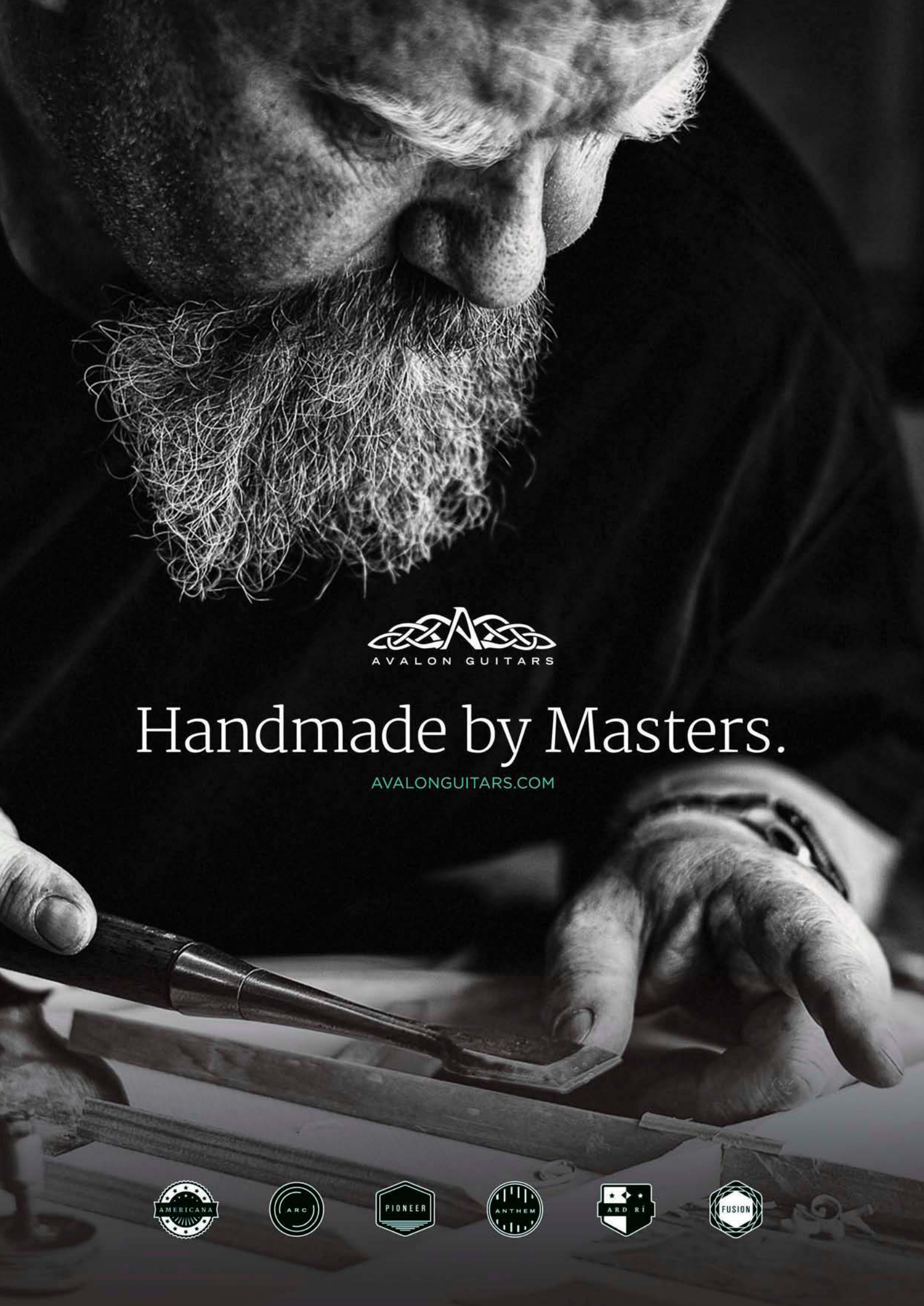
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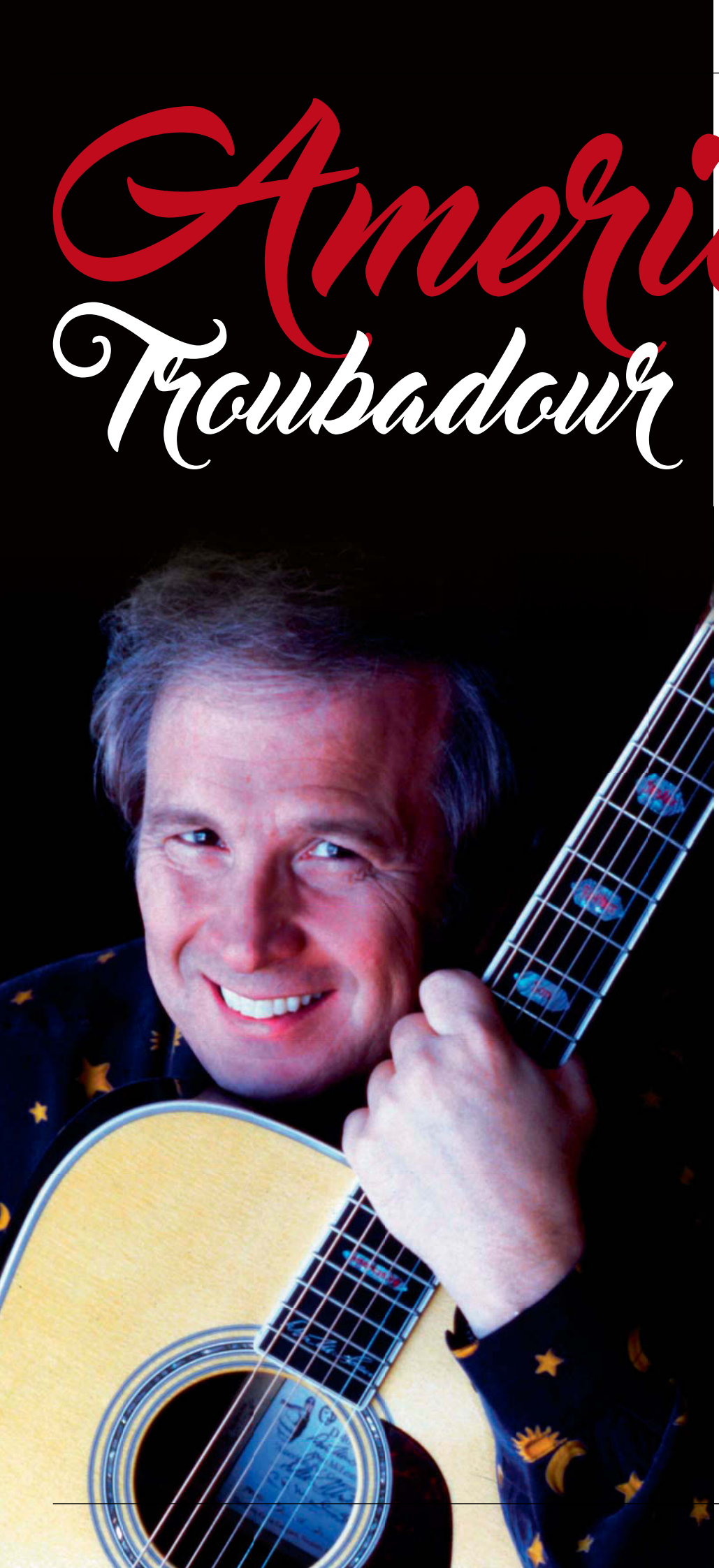

Few acoustic artists in history have been so intrinsically linked with Martin guitars, and particularly the Dreadnought, as Don McLean: the man who has owned what has been referred to as the 'most heard' Dreadnought of all time

"Hi, this is Don. Steve, right? Let's talk guitars." And so begins our telephone conversation. Despite his hectic touring schedule, McLean is quick to let me know he always has time to talk guitars. Of course, in McLean's case, that can only mean Martin guitars. Throughout his career, Martin guitars have been McLean's choice for writing, recording and performing. As we talk, it becomes clear that this is not a case of 'high-profile artist signs a contract to help promote high-profile guitar brand'. McLean is incredibly knowledgeable about Martin guitars, their construction characteristics, and the company's unique history. McLean is not just a collector of Martin guitars, he also collects Martin catalogues and peruses them for a pastime. His connection with the Martin Dreadnought goes beyond that of a singer-songwriter and an instrument. More than McLean owning his guitars, his guitars own a piece of him.

McLean's loyalty to Dreadnoughts dates back to a 'love at first sight' encounter with an Elvis Presley album. "At the age of 11 I saw Elvis Presley with a D-18 on the front of his first album," he says, "although I didn't know what it was at the time. Right away that image was something that impressed me enormously.

I then got to see that same guitar in different photographs on the backs of albums. That was the only place you could see an artist back in 1956. You'd have to go to the local record store and leaf through the albums. So, later, I'd see other pictures with Presley and there again was the same guitar. I remember I couldn't figure out the writing on the headstock, but recognised the shape of the headstock and I began to see these instruments around."

As pointed out by Dick Boak (see page 26), the success of the Kingston Trio played a major part in the Dreadnought's rise to fame. A contemporary of the trio, McLean remembers clearly the trio's connection with the Dreadnought. "In 1958 the Kingston Trio became very big and Bob Shane played a D-28, which appeared on the cover of an album called *At Large*. I said to myself, 'That's such a beautiful thing'. It was so elegant and I thought that if I could ever afford one I would get one, but it was completely out of my league."

McLean is obviously now a wealthy man, but in the late 50s his 'purchasing power' was more humble. "Back in 1957 I don't think I ever saw a five dollar bill! That's the way things were back then. You'd see 25 cents, 50 cents and maybe a dollar bill, but nothing more. The Martin Dreadnought was hundreds of dollars so it was completely out of the question."

"In the late 1960s I walked by a music store called the House of Music and there in the window was one of *those* guitars. You could always recognise it because of its simple styling and there was *that* headstock. I ran inside and asked the lady what kind of guitar was in the window. She said, 'That's a Martin Dreadnought. It's the best guitar in the world.' And that was that. I now knew what kind of guitar I'd been in love with all these years."

When buying his first guitar, it's interesting that McLean chose to wait until he could afford what he truly wanted rather than 'settle' for something else. "The first instrument I was able to afford was a D-18 that cost me about $180. That's the guitar I started my career with when I was 17 or 18 years old. In 1964, I traded up and brought a really nice D-28. It cost me $300. It was Brazilian rosewood and the best sounding guitar I'd ever heard. It was the most prized possession I'd ever had."

Another long-term player of Martin Dreadnoughts, David Crosby, is on record as saying that he believes the guitars take around eight years to 'open up'. McLean feels similarly. "One of the two guitars I've had on the road for 25 years was 10 years old when I brought it. As I became a seasoned musical performer and traveller, I found that a new guitar would still be moving around as the woods settled. But if you got one that was 10 or so years old, it was pretty much set."

McLean's Martin collection today numbers around 40 pieces, the majority being Dreadnoughts. However, for many years now, McLean has toured with only two. "I have a Don McLean signature model, which is one of two I've used exclusively on the road since 2000. This particular instrument has been broken twice by the airlines, but I've had it put back together. The other one is a D-41 that has lots of cracks in the top, the finish is grazed from life on the road, but it's a monster. I've had that one since 1990. If you've seen the *American Troubadour* movie there are some segments where I am wearing a green shirt singing 'Crying'. That's the guitar I'm playing."

As the conversation turns to his songwriting, McLean's comments support the belief that there are certain songs locked away in different guitars. "There's an alchemy and a magic to all of this songwriting stuff," he says. "There's something that's not earthbound to any of it. If you are so in love with an instrument, and that instrument inspires you, you will write songs with it. You're not going to write songs with a piece of shit. When I was a kid, I'd wake up in the morning and the first thing I'd do is just sit and look at my Martin Dreadnought. It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. As far as I was concerned, it wasn't a possession. It was alive and it was my rocket ship. When I put on my Martin guitar, I'm Don McLean. It's like my cape and who knows what it will accomplish in superhero mode!"

His connection with his instruments means that McLean chooses not to have a roadie on tour. "I handle my guitars myself," he says. "Nobody touches my instruments. When the show is over I have the cases to both guitars, I check them over and pack them carefully in the proper way every single night."

It would somehow not be right to be interviewing Don McLean and not talk about the mega-hit 'American Pie'. As one of the most-played songs on radio ever, some have suggested that the original D-28 which the song was written and recorded on is the most-heard Dreadnought of all time. Sadly, McLean doesn't own that particular guitar. "I have no idea where that guitar is," he says with a sigh. "I gave it to someone. They had problems and ended up selling it. I don't know who they sold it to. I also gave away the guitar that I recorded 'Vincent' with, which is another guitar that would have been heard an enormous amount of times, but that was a Martin 00-21."

As the conversation comes to an end, I offer thanks to Don for making to talk. But, as an indication of the affinity McLean feels towards the subject, he responds, "Thank you, I'm glad to be given the opportunity to talk about these things. I love talking about Martin guitars." ■

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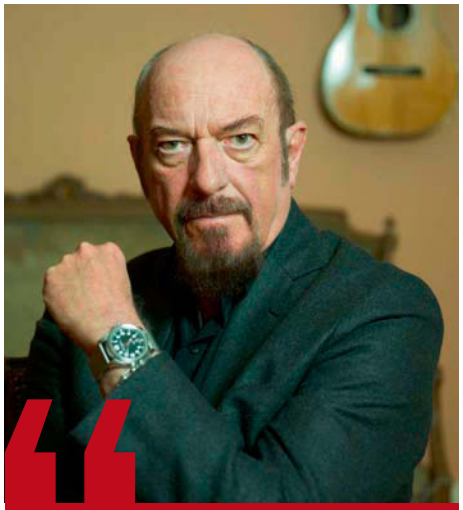
Acoustic Magazine
August 2015

THE MARTIN DREADNOUGHT

In their words

The great and the good of the acoustic world – players, luthiers, collectors, tutors and reviewers – sent us their thoughts on the enduring legacy of the Martin Dreadnought



IAN ANDERSON
JETHRO TULL

I have always thought of the Martin Dreadnought as the 'truck-driver's guitar'. Or, if I was feeling less charitable, as a coffin with strings attached. But its huge appeal lies in the big, full-bodied sound and the fact that it is a real man's instrument. No pussyfooting around with the little single-0 parlour guitars or the even smaller Martins – the 1s, the 2s, and the 2-and-a-halfs that I love so much. But what would you expect of a flute player with girly-hands? I guess preference for guitar shapes parallels the way in which we men think of women. The petite, curvy, wasp-waisted versus the big hips, thick belly and manly shoulders. I could go on. No, best not. Congratulations to C. F. Martin & Co for another huge icon of the acoustic music genre. Dear magnificent Lady D, bluegrass and country wouldn't be the same without you. Or might not even exist. God bless your enormous centenarian hips.

ROBBIE MCINTOSH
PAUL MCCARTNEY, JOHN MAYER, NORAH JONES

My D-18 is very special and has been my workhorse for years now. Chrissie Hynde gave it to me in 1987 – very generous considering it was when I left the Pretenders! It ticks all the boxes really. Even though they're big bodied, they have a remarkably even tone right across the frequency range, which is especially great for the studio. My son has a much newer D-18, which is the same. I think the thin back and sides contribute to this, and of course the 18s are mahogany. My D-18 is from 1970, so old enough. I've played older ones but mine is easily as good. I've used my D-18 on tons of sessions and on the road with Norah Jones and John Mayer. Both their FOH engineers said it was the best-amplified acoustic they'd ever come across. It's also on Paul McCartney's album *Flowers in the Dirt*, among others, and on my acoustic instrumental album *Unsung*. Thanks Martin for making such an iconic guitar, one that has stood the test of time more than any other!

ALUN LOWER
GEAR REVIEWER

In my career both as an editor and a writer for guitar magazines, I've never known a guitar to have such a profound effect on journos and musicians alike as the Martin Dreadnought. No matter whether electric or acoustic, metal or jazz, the result is always the same – wide-eyed affection and a deep sensory experience that I have yet to see successfully translated into copy. No matter how iconic the brand, not one of them can hold a candle to the indescribable magic that is contained in this wonderfully pure and iconic instrument. Congratulations, Martin. Long may the magic continue.

MIKE DAWES
VIRTUOSO FINGERSTYLE PLAYER & COLUMNIST

There are few guitars as iconic as the Martin D-28. I've been completely in love with their sound for many years and having the opportunity to play such a unique selection at Gruhns in Nashville was a dream come true. I think Martin managed to tick all the boxes with this one. The Dreadnought is a guitar suitable for powerful players, but is often overlooked as a responsive tool for those with a delicate touch. It is an icon of the acoustic world, congratulations to all those at Martin for the first 100 years, here's to 100 more!

ALBERT LEE

I regard the Martin Dreadnought as one of the very best acoustic guitars. It has been the staple of bluegrass players since the genre was conceived. I guess it was Lonnie Donegan who showed us how good a Dreadnought could sound. Sadly, I do not currently own one but I did have one in the 60s for a short while. It was a D-28E with two DeArmond pickups. I believe it may have belonged to Tony Sheridan when he worked with the Beatles in Hamburg. Back in those days it was hard to justify owning more than a couple of guitars so I had to let it go. I eventually became a huge fan of the 000s and bought a 000-28 from Tony Sheridan. Incidentally, my first school was named Dreadnought! Here's a picture of me with Chris Martin and the very first D-28.

GORDON GILTRAP

The Martin guitar company created the benchmark for other makers to follow and be influenced by. The Dreadnought had for many years become an industry standard for a large powerful sounding guitar. I congratulate them on this special birthday.

TONY WERNEKE
REPLAY ACOUSTICS

It's 2016, the 100th Anniversary of the Martin Dreadnought and therefore the 100th anniversary of an idea so revolutionary and with such impact as to change the musical world forever. Nothing before and nothing since has made the impact on the acoustic guitar world like that made by the Martin Dreadnought. And only C.F. Martin, the most venerable guitar company in the world, would have the conceptual depth to have accomplished such a task. It was no mistake. In listening to the music world in 1916 and trying to perceive what was wanted and needed, they designed a guitar that has gone unimproved for 100 years with no sign of that changing. We here at Replay Acoustics celebrate 100 years of the dreadnought and 183 years of C.F. Martin & Co. The Martin Dreadnought: the game-changer and the granddaddy of all acoustic guitars.

CLIVE CARROLL

I'll never forget the first time I heard *Aerial Boundaries* by Michael Hedges. He used his Martin D-28 and the playing, compositions and sound on that recording resulted in one of the most iconic guitar albums ever.

PAUL BRETT
ACOUSTIC GUITAR COLLECTOR

Martin Dreadnoughts, especially those from the 30s and 40s are the pinnacle of the art. In terms of collectability and resale, you are far safer with these as they rarely lose their value and, as you will see from price checks, some are worth more than a house! Sure, they are not cheap and they don't suit all styles of playing, but once hooked on 'that' Martin sound, players rarely have their head turned by anything else.

ADRIAN LUCAS
A.J. LUCAS GUITARS

The Martin Dreadnought is an iconic design. It is so ubiquitous that, for many, it has become synonymous with the acoustic guitar itself. Congratulations to Martin Guitars, and here's to the next 100 years!

PATRICK EGGLE
PATRICK JAMES EGGLE GUITARS

The first proper guitar I ever played was a Martin HD-28. I was surprised by how loud it was. Someone once told me that Martin built the Dreadnought because, in the days before amplification, players needed to balance the volume of the guitar with fiddles, banjos and mandolins. If I am building a guitar and my customer has listed volume and bass as their overriding criteria, it will more than likely be a Dreadnought.

RICHARD HOOVER
SANTA CRUZ GUITAR COMPANY

All of my early musical influences confirmed that a Martin Dreadnought was the only guitar to aspire to. Any other brand or model was like getting socks instead of a bicycle for Christmas. Life was good if you could get the $295 to buy a new D-18; the only way life could be better was to somehow find $450 for a D-28! The acquisition of my beautiful Brazilian Rosewood D-28 in 1968 altered my course in life and the heartbreaking loss of that guitar inspired my lifelong career as a guitar builder myself. Hats off to the Martin family for a timeless design for which all at Santa Cruz send their gratitude.

NICK HARPER

I guess the Martin D-45SS Stephen Stills signature model would be at the top of my guitar wish list. Stephen, with his Dreadnought plus 'Black Queen' and 'Helplessly Hoping', equals at least 50 per cent of my guitar inspiration. Happy centenary Martin Dreadnought.

MARTIN SIMPSON

I fell in love with songs long before I fell in love with the guitar. By the age of 10 I knew that I wanted to sing songs and I realised that I should learn to play an instrument to accompany myself. At that time I owned very few records, the Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul & Mary were the main attractions. On the sleeve of the Kingston Trio record was a photo of the gentlemen and their instruments. I studied long and hard as to which of these instruments should be mine, the tenor guitar I quickly rejected, so it was the Vega Pete Seeger banjo or what I soon learned was the Martin Dreadnought. I decided I needed a big guitar like that and soon I was seeing the same instrument in the hands of Lester Flatt, Doc Watson, Brownie McGhee, and Joni Mitchell, among many others.

The Martin Dreadnought was ubiquitous but I could not dream of affording one. By the time I could consider buying such a guitar I'd decided that they were too big and possibly not optimal for the way I played. Some years later, living in the USA, I began to encounter guitars beyond my imagination and all my perceptions of this industry standard changed. I had the shocking pleasure of playing two 1934 D-18s in Lawrence, Kansas. They remain in my memory as two of the most expressive and beautiful sounding guitars that I have ever played. They were part of a very fine, small collection and were definitely not for sale. More recently, I played a 1937 D-18 belonging to my friend, Tony Werneke at Replay Acoustics. Again, I was shocked in every way by the sound of the instrument; its balance, its clarity, its volume and sustain and its apparently endless dynamic range. Mercifully for my bank balance, I still find the Martin Dreadnought too big to play for hours on end. If I was taller, it may have been a different story. Happy Birthday, Mr Dreadnought.

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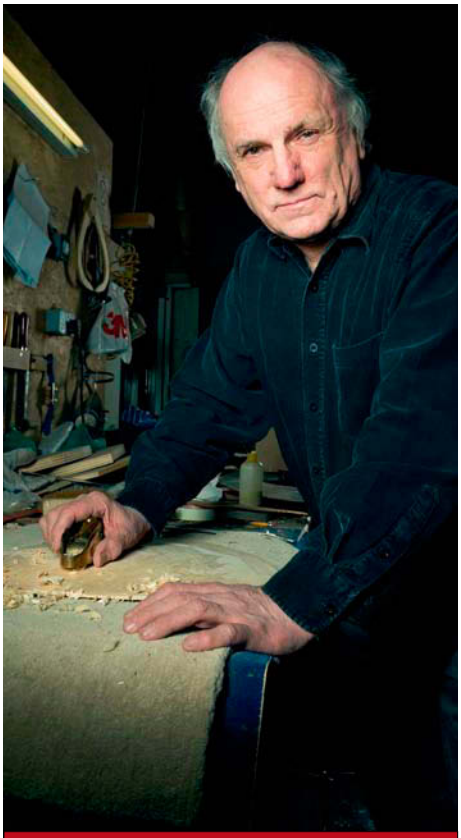
GRAHAM NASH
CROSBY, STILLS & NASH

I first became aware of the Martin Dreadnought through Stephen Stills, and the first one I actually saw 'in the flesh' was his. Immediately after I saw it, I wanted one. The Dreadnought I then ordered arrived about six weeks before Woodstock and that was the guitar I played onstage. I've played Martin Dreadnoughts ever since.

ALISTER ATKIN
ATKIN GUITARS

The Dreadnought is the guitar that inspired me to become a luthier. I can pin it down to one image; Stephen Stills on the front of the Crosby, Stills & Nash album cover holding his D-28. Most of my favourite music was recorded on one and it's sound still continues to captivate me. Making exceptional Dreadnoughts is still what drives me to keep making guitars – I think I can speak for many luthiers when I say that. The pre-war D-28 is the Holy Grail of acoustics.



ROGER BUCKNALL MBE
FYLDE GUITARS

Martin guitars have always been the reference point for other guitar makers. Their development over the last hundred years or so has been alongside much of the music of the same period. Every guitar maker owes Martin a debt.

SIMON MAYOR

I first became aware of the real potential of the Martin Dreadnought when I discovered bluegrass. In the early days of the genre, the 30s, 40s and 50s, it was used just as a rhythm instrument, but later its huge, dark sound was harnessed by Clarence White, Tony Rice and a host of others who, undaunted by the heavy strings and high action favoured by bluegrass musicians, played melody lines and improvised breaks with a fluency most electric guitarists would only dream of. As bluegrass gave birth to 'jazzgrass', 'new acoustic' – call it what you want – a whole new breed of virtuoso flatpickers was born. Throughout it all, the Martin Dreadnought, and the D-28 in particular, has remained the definitive sound of the genre. That's quite a legacy.

CHRIS WOODS

I'm a Martin guitar addict. I know for some they just see another brand obsession, but for me it's genuinely so much more than that. The Martin Dreadnought is our musical history, our musical culture. Ultimately Martin guitars have almost exclusively crafted the sonic acoustic world around us, and the Dreadnought is the boss.

SIMON SMIDMORE
BROOK GUITARS

The Martin Dreadnought is without doubt a design classic and the first modern guitar to depart visually from the tight-waisted instruments from the previous centuries. Custom makers like ourselves have all used it as an inspiration for our own take on the design.

DANIEL HO

Congratulations to Martin Guitars on the 100th anniversary of this beautiful and iconic design. The Dreadnought has truly carved its place in guitar history as a classic.

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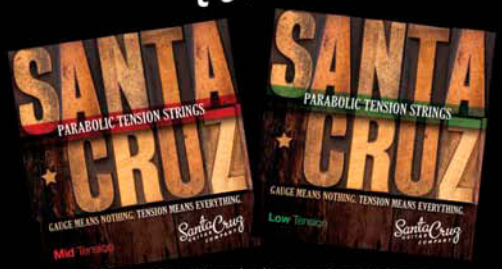

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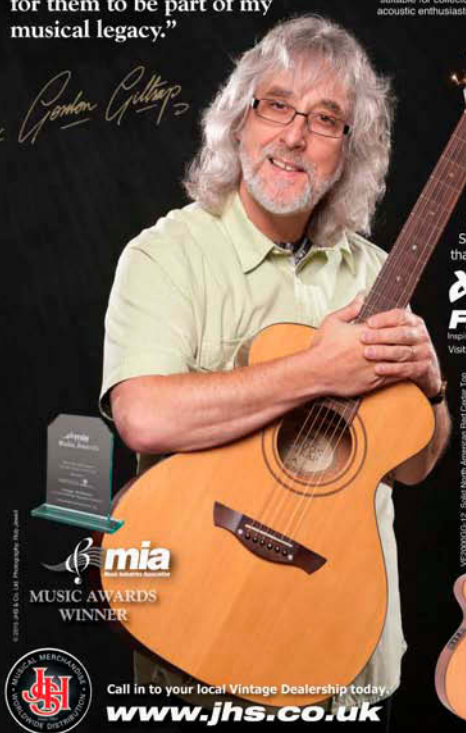

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CUSTOM SIGNATURE & SPECIAL EDITION DREADNOUGHTS

The Martin custom shop has been responsible for some stunning and wholly desirable signature models over the years. Here's our pick of some of the most interesting, notable and jaw-droppingly gorgeous Dreadnought models to have graced the Martin catalogue

1 D-45
GENE AUTRY

In some respects, it was this signature model that pioneered the way for those to come. It was also the first D-45 ever made by Martin. Autry had custom ordered a 12-fret Dreadnought in the early 1930s with the addition of some special ornamentation. Special Style-45 abalone-pearl bordering was stipulated and Gene's name was inlaid in mother-of-pearl script across the fingerboard. The resulting instrument appeared frequently in the movies and recordings of Gene Autry's long and colourful career. The guitar is currently the centre-piece at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in the Hollywood Hills. It's reported that Martin Chairman and CEO, Chris Martin IV, visited the museum to meet with Autry and view the guitar. At the meeting, Autry informed Martin that he had refused an offer in excess of $1,000,000 from a collector. The meeting also led to collaboration between Martin and the museum where a licence would be granted for replica models to be produced. It was agreed that a portion of the proceeds from the sale of each instrument would be donated to the museum. The prototypes were released in 1994 and had a retail price of $22,000 each.

2 D-35
JOHNNY CASH

At the time when Dick Boak, head of artist relations at Martin Guitars, made the approach, Cash already owned a number of Martins in his collection, including a black D-35 (pictured) that he used as his primary stage guitar. With assistance from Brian Farmer, Johnny's guitar technician, specifications were arrived at for a D-42 model with 13 pearl-bordered abalone stars as fretboard position markers and Cash's signature at the last fret. Boak presented the number-one model to Cash backstage at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, and recalls that Johnny immediately fell in love with the guitar. Cash regularly used the guitar on the road until the day he fell onto the guitar onstage, damaging it badly. The guitar was subsequently couriered back to Nazareth where the craftsmen in the repair department brought the guitar back to life. The guitar's resurrection coincided with Cash's own recovery from illness. Such were the striking looks of the Johnny Cash Signature Model guitars that, while recording a television special together, Johnny's close friend Willie Nelson would go onto perform with a D-42JC.

3 D-40DM DON MCLEAN

Famed for his loyalty to Martin guitars, Don McLean has amassed an enviable collection that includes a 00-21, two 000-28s, a 000-45, two D-35S 12-fret models, three D-28s, a D-40 Brazilian edition, a pair of D-41s, a pair of D-45s and several custom models. Dick Boak reports that when McLean was approached regarding the possibility of a signature edition, he was extremely flattered. McLean said that, given the choice between a Grammy and the honour of being chosen for a Martin limited edition signature model, he'd "take the Martin any day". With reference to the mega-hit 'American Pie', which itself was written on a Martin D-28, the Don McLean signature edition's ebony fretboard bears the words, 'King', 'Queen', 'Jester', 'Father', 'Son' 'Holy Ghost', 'Jack Flash', and 'American Pie', etched with abalone substrate. To match the *American Pie* album artwork, the interior label for each instrument included Don's 'thumbs up' logo, complete with a hand-coloured American flag and single-star motif. The edition size was limited to no more than 71 instruments in keeping with the year the song was written. Selecting a charity which would benefit from sales of the model was easy for McLean. He had initiated his own Don McLean foundation years before in support of homeless shelters, day-care centres, teenage halfway houses and soup kitchens.

4 HD-40MK MARK KNOPFLER

Martin Guitar's introduction to Knopfler came through Eric Clapton, whose own signature model had been completed shortly before – a guitar that Knopfler had seen, played and was impressed by. After poring over Martin catalogues, books and literature, Knopfler homed in on the Vintage series HD-28V as a starting point for his own signature model. In addition, Knopfler had spotted an antique rosette design from 1840 that he really loved. In a strange colliding of worlds, a team of palaeontologists from the University of Utah were enjoying great success finding dinosaur fossils in north-western Madagascar. Significant finds happened every time they played Dire Straits albums. So much so that it became something of a joke. If nothing had been found for a few days, another Dire Straits album would be put on and they'd find something. As a result they named the previously undiscovered dinosaur species *Masiakasaurus Knopfleri*. Upon hearing about this, Dick Boak wanted to incorporate a design of the dinosaur on the signature model somehow. In discussions with Knopfler, who was initially reticent, it was agreed that the laser-etched design would be buried inside the body of the guitar somewhere. The thought being that owners of the signature model would have to 'discover' the Knopfleri for themselves – just like they did in Madagascar.

5 D-18DC DAVID CROSBY

As mentioned, Johnny Cash's signature model, the D-42JC was hand-delivered to him by Dick Boak backstage at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. It was on this occasion that Boak was introduced to David Crosby. The meeting was brief but work started on a signature model with associates of Crosby. However, numerous attempts to make contact with Crosby remained unanswered and there was some doubt that the project would ever see the light of day. Out of the blue, Martin received an email from Crosby who needed, of all things, a replacement guitar case. He was unaware and apologetic that the project had started and then slowed without his knowledge. Ongoing direct contact was made and the project made swift progress. From his time with the Byrds to the founding of Crosby, Stills & Nash, David had always been enamoured with D-18 models and it was this model that proved to be the starting point for the signature edition. Enhancements included an Engelmann spruce top with blue Paua shell rosette, and ebony fingerboard, bridge and headplate. Upon receipt of the prototype, Crobsy personally called Boak to thank him and express his happiness with the guitar. Most significantly, Crosby retired the Martin D-45 he had been using for years in favour of the new signature edition.

6 D-45SS STEPHEN STILLS

Described by Dick Boak as 'the most fervent Martin aficionado in the group [Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young] and a serious Martin collector', Stephen Stills is well-known for being incredibly astute in his knowledge of the Martin's history and instruments. Stills' love of higher-end vintage models persuaded him to lean toward the direction of a Brazilian D-45. So excited was he about the project that he visited the factory with notepad in hand full of handwritten notes and ideas. The day ended with agreements made concerning the specifications for 'Southern Cross' D-45 signature edition. A digitised version of the constellation was created and mother-or-pearl was used to inlay the configuration into the pickguard. Initial prototypes were shipped to Stills for his comments. Such was his fastidiousness and knowledge of exactly what he wanted an extensive 'snag-list' was returned. Toner was needed for the top, one of the bindings was too tall to be indicative of 30s styling, and Stills wanted the model to be offered with hexagon inlays as well as Style-45 snowflakes as were the original 91 D-45s of the pre-war era. Though frustrated that there was still much to do, the team at Martin respected Stills' knowledge and vision; it ensured the signature model possessed accuracy and integrity. The finished guitar was the subject of TV attention with ABC filming Stills overseeing the production process.

7 D-28 JOHN LENNON 75TH ANNIVERSARY

John Lennon acquired his first D-28 in 1967 around the time that the video for 'Hello Goodbye' was filmed. Lennon owned several other D-28s over the following years and they each played an integral role in Lennon's songwriting and performances. During the Sgt Pepper period, in addition to the psychedelic suit, it was a D-28 that Lennon wore. It's thought that *The White Album*'s 'Julia' was penned and recorded on a D-28. To commemorate what would have been Lennon's 75th birthday, a limited run of 75 anniversary models were released earlier this year. Subtle adornments reference Lennon's life and work, including his famous 'Imagine' self-portrait that sits beneath the Martin script logo, and the 'peace sign' marquetry to the guitar's back. The anniversary edition's remaining inlay theme is inspired by several of Lennon's song lyrics; 'The moon, the stars and the sun' (from 'Instant Karma'), the number nine (from 'Revolution #9' and '#9 Dream'), Lennon's round eyeglasses and his signature, inlaid in mother of pearl between the 19th and 20th frets. The pickguard bears a large sun inlay in mother of pearl with rays that emanate toward the rosette that is circumscribed with nearly two dozen mother of pearl peace signs against a black background.

8 D-28 ELVIS PRESLEY CVR

The King of Rock'n'Roll's first Martin guitar was a used 000-18 purchased in 1954, but within months he traded it in for a 1942 Martin D-18, which was followed the next year by a 1955 D-28 fitted with a custom-tooled leather cover with his name across the lower bout. A Martin was also Elvis' main acoustic at the end of his career, playing a mid-1970s D-28 during his last concert tour. Indeed, it was the last guitar he played onstage in June 1977. In tribute to Presley on the 30th anniversary of his death – which, coincidentally, was also the 175th anniversary of the Martin Guitar Company – two special D-28s were released. The D-28M Elvis Presley Commemorative Limited Edition was restricted to just 175 models and featured Madagascar rosewood back and sides, while the unrestricted D-28 Elvis Presley Commemorative Limited Edition features back and sides of East Indian rosewood. Adornments included a silhouette of Elvis on the ebony headstock, modelled after a famous 1956 photograph. Presley's signature was inlaid at the 12th fret and the heelcap features his 'TCB Lightning Bolt' logo – a design that originated with the 'Taking Care of Business' pendants Elvis gave to friends – inlaid in mother of pearl. No commemorative Elvis Presley Martin would be complete without the infamous leather cover modelled on the original. As a result, an oversized Geib style hardcase was commissioned to accommodate the guitar and cover.

9 HD7
ROGER MCGUINN

From putting folk-rock and country-rock on the map as leader of the Byrds, to harnessing technology to support his craft, Roger McGuinn has been a pioneer, even while creating some of the most memorable music of his generation. So when McGuinn approached Martin with an idea for a custom guitar, it's no surprise it was something radical. The finished guitar proved so exceptional that Martin, in turn, requested of McGuinn that it became a signature edition model. Approval was granted and thus the HD7 Roger McGuinn Signature Edition was born and it remains one of the most unusual instruments in the Signature Series collection. Featuring a doubled G-string, with the second string tuned an octave higher (as it would be on a regular 12-string) the HD7 captures McGuinn's signature 'jingle-jangle' 12-string sound. Referred to by McGuinn as, 'The Swiss army knife of guitars', the double-G string lends itself extra power in the mid-range without any addition effort or special fingering from the player. The guitar's soundboard is tinted with vintage toner and protected by a polished tortoise-coloured pickguard. Both the special nut and compensated saddle are fashioned from genuine bone. Each model bears an interior numbered label signed by Roger McGuinn and C.F. Martin IV.

10 D-28
JOHN MARTYN

The vast majority of artists who have had the honour of a Martin guitar in their name have been American. However, in 2007, with full backing from Nazareth, an ambitious programme to redress the balance was hatched by Martin's UK distributor, Westside Distribution. One by one, an all new series of guitars, commissioned by Westside but created in Martin's Custom Shop, was released under the name UK Artist Series. The John Martyn model is something of an amalgam of three different Martins owned by Martyn; a D-28, a 1¾ 000-16 Special Edition, and a rare 0 shape from the early 1900s with a slotted headstock. The finished guitar's fretboard featured Martyn's signature at the 12th fret and, at the fifth fret, is an inlay of the 'Orb' image as taken from Martyn's *Solid Air* album. Martyn was very involved in the whole process of designing the guitar but, in a cruel twist of fate, he never actually got to hold the finished model. Numbers one, two and three arrived in the UK from Nazareth and had been unpacked. Once the guitars had settled, final checks had been made and were ready to be sent on to Martyn. A telephone call was made to finalise delivery arrangements but Martyn wasn't home and a call-back the following day was suggested. Sadly, Martyn died that night.

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10 FAMOUS DREADNOUGHT PLAYERS

Martin Dreadnoughts have been owned and played by some of the biggest names in music. In no particular order, here's our top ten

WORDS: STEVE HARVEY

1 PAUL MCCARTNEY
D-28L

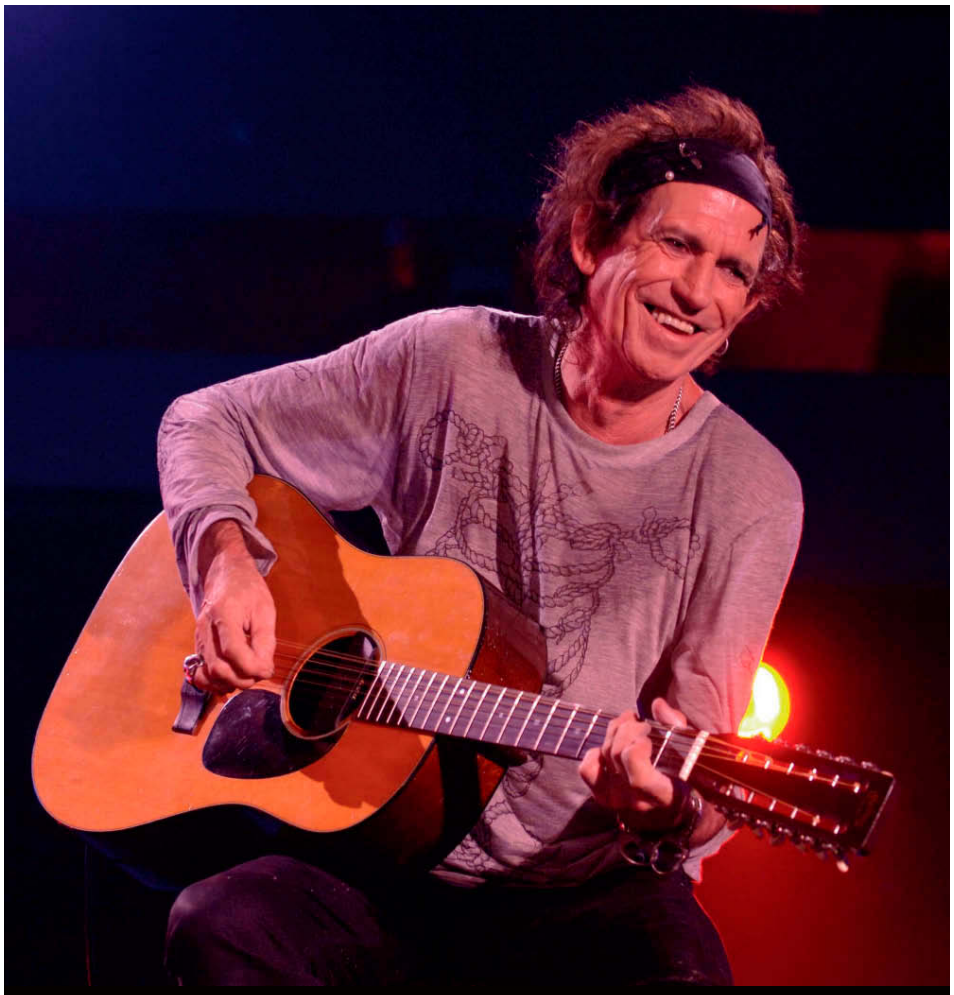
Paul McCartney's contribution to popular music is a permanent one and this most visible and prolific surviving Beatle has long depended on his left-handed D-28L. Though difficult to catalogue, McCartney's Dreadnoughts have been the canvas upon which some of the most enduring songs in history were written on. Dreadnoughts have appeared on numerous Beatles, Wings and solo albums, and it was also the guitar he chose to be photographed with for the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine in February 1990. Should you feel so inclined, there is some wonderful YouTube footage of McCartney in 1968 demo-ing the song 'Blackbird' to George Martin on a D-28, though this particular guitar was a right-handed model which had been spun upside down and restrung. When appearing on *Parkinson* in 1995, McCartney took with him a D-18. For 1991's MTV *Unplugged* concert in London – and while longtime sideman Robbie McIntosh switched guitars on almost every song –McCartney played the same D-18 throughout. To this day, when playing either full acoustic sets or simply acoustic guitar with the band, McCartney reaches for his Martin Dreadnought.

2 NEIL YOUNG
D-45 & D-28

Neil Young has been described by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website as, "one of rock and roll's greatest songwriters and performers". Young also made the top 100 of *Rolling Stone*'s 'One Hundred Greatest Guitarists of All Time'. Known for being a collector of second-hand guitars, there are only a select few that are chosen for recording and performing. Young's primary acoustic is a D-45, which was used to originally play 'Old Man' among others. It was one of four instruments bought by Stephen Stills for himself and his band-mates in Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young to celebrate their first full concert at the Greek Theatre in 1969. Young also owns a D-28 named 'Hank' after its previous owner, Hank Williams. The story goes that Williams traded the guitar for some shotguns and it subsequently made its way through a number of owners until it was located by Young's longtime friend, Grant Boatwright. The guitar was then purchased by Young who toured with it for over 30 years. It was the primary acoustic for 2005's *Prairie Wind*. Young also owns a vintage D-18 which was his workhorse during the early part of his career, before receiving the above D-45 from Stephen Stills. This D-18 can also been seen on rare footage from Woodstock. It was used for an exceptional acoustic duet of the Buffalo Springfield track 'Mr Soul' with Stills. The guitar has often been used to carry dropped standard tuning (DGCFAD) which Young often uses in concert. This allowed him to perform songs such as 'Ambulance Blues' and 'Don't Let It Bring You Down' live without having to retune. Though many of his contemporaries, not to mention his bandmates in CSN&Y, have signature models, Young is a notable exclusion, being the 'one that got away'.

3 DAVID GILMOUR
D-18 & D-35

David Gilmour's use of Martin Dreadnoughts is interesting. It's fairly easy to find information relating to the Dreadnoughts the Pink Floyd guitarist owns, but it's incredibly difficult to find photography of them being used live. Rumour has it that Gilmour holds his enviable collection in such high regard that he refuses to let them leave the safety of either his home or studio. There is, however, some fantastic footage of Gilmour playing *Dark Side of the Moon*'s 'Breathe' in (the safety of) his studio with nothing but a D-35 for accompaniment.

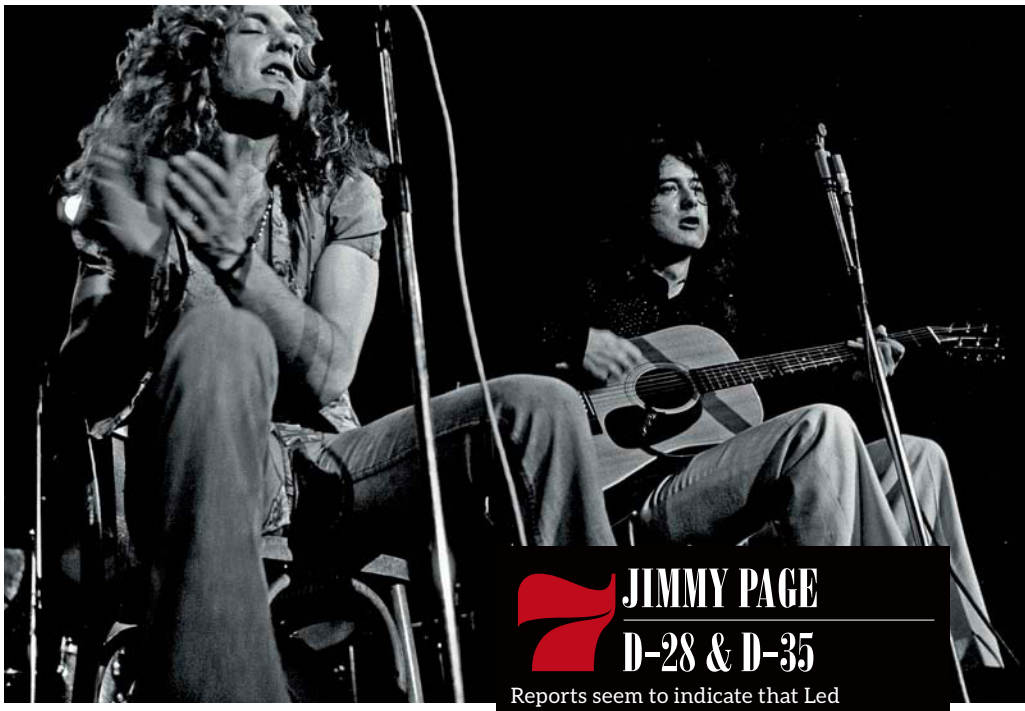


4 KEITH RICHARDS
D12-18

A falling out with Mick Jagger in the late 1980s led Keith Richards to release his debut solo album *Talk Is Cheap* in 1988. Keith used several Martins on the album including a 1967 D-18. He commented, "I love Martin acoustics. On a lot of tracks, if I can, I'll always have an acoustic overdub, whether it's just playing along or as an underlay. Sometimes you can hardly even hear it. But it helps push the song while it adds a bit of ambience." Richards also used a 1939 D-18 for recording and performance of the 1995 album *Stripped*. Despite its age, the guitar remains one of his road guitars, as well as one of his main guitars in the studio. Richards also owned a D-45 which was toured in 1972. When asked about the whereabouts of that particular guitar, Richards commented, "That's another one somebody walked off with."

5 KURT COBAIN
D-18

Nirvana's frontman and driving force, Kurt Cobain, was obviously known more for the heavily overdriven sound of electric guitars, but when an acoustic was called for more often than not it was a Martin Dreadnought he used. Among his collection was a 1953 D-18 that he purchased while on tour shortly before the 1991 release of the seminal *Nevermind* album. This guitar was played regularly by him before being gifted to indie-folk rock musician and then-girlfriend Mary Lou Lord during their brief relationship. Mary Lou Lord played the guitar regularly (with the guitar strung right-handed, Cobain was a left-handed player) during her career, on tour and in the studio, and often shared the guitar with other artists. For MTV's *Unplugged* Cobain used a late 1950s D-18 which had been purchased from Voltage Guitar in Los Angeles in 1993. Work was subsequently done on the nut so that the right-handed guitar could be played by Cobain.



6 NOEL GALLAGHER
HD-28

Just prior to leaving for his first solo world tour, Gallagher purchased a D-28. He is on record as saying, "It's a D-28 and I bought it brand-new in a shop – just straight off the peg. It's incredible. It's got a new LR Baggs pickup system in it, which is pretty amazing. When it arrived it sounded like a great guitar, but now, even though it's only a few years old, it's completely broken in and sounds incredible. I haven't been precious with it, and when people see it, they assume it's an old guitar." The Dreadnought used on that album is not the same one though as Gallagher goes on to explain, "I didn't use it on the record, though. I used another Martin – one that belongs to one of the guys in the studio. We were recording and there was this Martin hanging up, so I took it down, started it strumming it, miked it up, and it felt very natural. I used it on all the record. I've since tried to buy that guitar, but the owner won't sell it to me."

7 JIMMY PAGE
D-28 & D-35

Reports seem to indicate that Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page first purchased a Martin D-28 in 1970, and certainly before 28 June when the guitar made its onstage debut at the Festival of Blues & Progressive Music Festival. The D-28 was played on the song, 'That's The Way'. Page then went on to use the guitar on Led Zeppelin's 1970 tour of the United States, and then again for Zeppelin's European tour in 1973. For the group's five-show stint at London's Earl's Court in 1975, the band played a four song mini-acoustic set in the middle. For these four songs, Page used the D-28. The songs played included 'Tangerine', 'Going to California', 'That's The Way' and 'Bron-Y-Aur Stomp'. In 1977, Page acquired a second D-28, and brought both guitars to play on Led Zeppelin's 1977 tour of America, using his first model for standard tuning, and the second for open tunings. After the demise of Led Zeppelin, Page's Dreadnoughts were not seen again until 1994, when a D-28 re-emerged for the Page and Plant *Unledded* tour where again he the guitar to play a new rendition of 'The Rain Song'. In terms of the D-28's recording history, although we can't be sure, due to the fact that Page purchased the guitar around the time Led Zeppelin recorded their third album, and well before their fourth, it's assumed that he used it on those two albums. More recently, Page also used a D-28 Marquis during a performance of 'Same Old Rock' at Roy Harper's 70th birthday celebration in 2011. Page as since put that particular guitar up for auction. It was sold for £26,250 at Bonham's in July 2013.

8 CHRIS MARTIN
D-28 & D-15M

Given his name, we'd suggest Coldplay's Chris Martin was destined to play Martin guitars (nominative determinism, perhaps?). Indeed, YouTube is littered with videos of Martin playing Martin Dreadnoughts in stripped-down acoustic sets, solo or with the rest of the band. During Coldplay's *Mylo Xyloto* tour of 2011/2012, Chris Martin used a Martin D-15M throughout, the guitar having been 'customised' by the paintbrush of its owner. In 2012, Martin performed at a benefit concert for victims of Hurricane Sandy at Madison Square Gardens in New York. He sang REM's 'Losing My Religion' with Michael Stipe with only a D-28 for accompaniment. In 2013, the band's live show was punctuated with Martin's solo performance of 'Viva La Vida', again with only a D-28 for accompaniment. Recent videos continue to give evidence of Chris Martin's preference for Martin Dreadnoughts.

9 BEN HOWARD
D-28L

With his clever fingerpicking patterns and deeply personal lyrics, Ben Howard burst onto the music scene in 2011 and subsequently won two Brits Awards in 2013. Howard performed at the Brits that same year with his D-28L. He also played Glastonbury in 2013 and 2015, on both occasions using his D-28L. In an interview with this magazine, he said, "I started on Martin Dreadnoughts because I love the warm, rich bottom-end with the open and drop tunings. I've got a couple now, and Martin kindly helps me out with them. They're one of the only guitar companies that make a lot of left-handed models. I have such trouble with lefties, so I'm really fortunate that Martin makes them. I mean, damn, they make amazing acoustic guitars. Once you get onto a D-28, you don't really go back after that."

10 MARCUS MUMFORD
D-28 & D-42

Marcus Mumford is known to be a fan of Martin guitars generally and has been seen using a variety of models. Of late, his two D-28s (Mary-Kate and Ashley, as they've been named), are the most favoured guitars. Mumford is on record as commenting, "My D-28s are incredible instruments, and that's what I use for the heavier, percussive stuff." One of the two D-28s is tuned to CACGCE, while the other varies between DADF#AD and DADFAD (open D and open D minor). At the Brit Awards in 2011 where the band won Album of the Year, Mumford & Sons performed 'Timshel' with only a Dreadnought for company. The same is true of the band's performance of 'I Will Wait' at the 2013 Brit Awards where Mumford & Sons won Best British Group. The same song was performed at the 55th Grammy Awards in 2013 where the band won Album of the Year, again with a Dreadnought.

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SEAGULL MARITIME CONCERT HALL SWS SG QIT

Steve Harvey checks out an all-solid, Canadian-built, medium-sized electro from Seagull that benefits from some clever and proprietary construction techniques

WORDS: STEVE HARVEY **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

The award winning Seagull marque is an offshoot of parent company Godin, and was launched by Robert Godin in 1982. While competitors move manufacturing to Asian factories where labour costs are low, each and every guitar in the extensive Seagull range is made in the company's native Canada.

In pursuit of tone, Seagull focuses massively on the guitar's soundboard. One of the key construction techniques results in every Seagull's top having a 'compound curve'. In essence, this means the soundboard has a slight radius to it which, Seagull states, resists downward pressure created by the fingerboard and results in greater structural integrity. The increased stability means that Seagull is able to use a thinner and more lightly braced soundboard. Interestingly, only the area above the soundhole (the upper bouts) is curved. The soundboard below the soundhole is left flat. The thinking behind this is based on the fact that the area of the soundboard around the bridge is, by its nature, the most resonant and 'active' area. By reducing the thickness and bracing to the areas surrounding the upper frets, the Seagull's soundboard, in effect, becomes something of a hybrid.

In addition, every soundboard in Seagull's range is also 'pressure tested'. The procedure involves using machinery to test the top and ensure it meets a standard of rigidity and stiffness while retaining sufficient flexibility for harmonic vibration. Seagull claims this pressure testing not only improves the tonal character of the guitars, but also the lifespan.

Our review model is the rather awkwardly named Maritime Concert Hall SWS SG QIT. Let's break that down: Maritime is the name of the range, Concert Hall is the body shape,

"Seagull claims that pressure testing not only improves the tonal character of the guitars, but also the lifespan"

SWS stands for Solid Wood Series, SG stands for semi-gloss and Q1T refers to the onboard electrics. Having established that, you'll forgive me for not using its full name from here on!

Seagull's all-solid Maritime range includes a dreadnought, a mini-jumbo and folk-bodied versions, some models being available with a high-gloss finish (HG in the prefix). On review is the Concert Hall which was released at NAMM 2015 and is essentially Seagull's take on the Martin OM body shape. When held up against a Martin OM-28, the Seagull is a little narrower across the lower bouts but has a deeper body. OM body shapes and their derivatives are medium-sized and something of a bridge between the hit-you-between-the-eyes punch of a dreadnought and the sweetness and clarity of a 00, folk or parlour shape. As such, OM shaped acoustics are very popular with all-rounders; players who like to strum as much as play fingerstyle and solo.

First impressions are excellent. It's a totally subjective thing but, for this reviewer, less is more in terms of decoration. The simple, classic lines and understated appearance of the Concert Hall are very appealing. The solid spruce top is a fine selection and has been skilfully bookmatched. The binding and coachlining too are beautifully executed, as is the two-piece solid mahogany back, which features some delicate centre parquetry. The same parquetry continues through the base of the guitar where the two sides of solid mahogany meet. Also at the base of the guitar is the housing for the 9-volt battery and ¼" input jack, which doubles-up as a strap button.

In keeping with the theme of modest and unfussy adornments, the rosewood fingerboard features only simple dot-markers and the soundhole rosette is stylish without

"All in all, it's difficult to find justifiable fault with the guitar's acoustic performance"

SEAGULL
MARITIME CONCERT HALL SWS SG QIT

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Seagull
Model: Concert Hall SWS SG QIT
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Body Size: Orchestral
Made In: Canada
Top: Select pressure tested solid spruce
Back and Sides: Solid mahogany
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 21
Tuners: Seagull branded chrome enclosed
Nut Width: 1.72"
Scale Length: 24.84"
Onboard Electrics: Quantum 1 EQ
Strings Fitted: Godin HD
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Superb acoustic tone, stylish looks, excellent standards of construction and finish
Cons: No case
Overall: An elegant and highly-capable electro that ticks a long list of boxes. A stand-out all-rounder

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★
Build Quality: ★★★★½
Value for Money: ★★★★½
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.seagullguitars.com

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WHSmith

"It's well balanced and comparatively lightweight, which is a good thing because this guitar can sing"

being flashy. The three-piece mahogany 'Integrated Set Neck' has been developed to work in conjunction with the compound curved soundboard mentioned earlier. Seagull's headstock shape divided opinion here at *Acoustic* Towers. Some liked the thinner, more compact shape, while others expressed a preference for more 'bulk' from the headstock. Whatever your preference, the design itself is clever. Those that have read recent technical articles published in this magazine will be aware that creating a headstock where the tuning posts are centrally positioned helps maintain neck stability. Where the position of tuning posts causes the strings to run at an angle from the nut slot, lateral tension on the neck can be an issue.

Taking a peek inside the soundhole, the neat and clean finish of the interior gives evidence of high standards of quality control. It's good to see the use of quarter-sawn Adirondack spruce for the bracing struts, which have been scalloped and carved to mimic the curvature of the top. Being very lightweight and responsive, Adirondack spruce is an ideal choice for bracing material.

Onboard electronics come in the form of Godin's QIT system, which utilises an under-saddle pickup. The control panel is located on the upper bout and includes rotaries for Volume, Bass and Treble, and a chromatic tuner with LED display.

When held on the lap, the Seagull is a comfortable guitar to play. It's well balanced and comparatively lightweight, which is a good thing because this guitar can sing – you'll struggle to keep it down!

Fingerstyle playing is equally impressive. The mids are particularly strong, almost gritty, no doubt emanating from the solid mahogany back and sides. The Seagull responds well to variances in fingerstyle dynamics and, all in all, it's difficult to find justifiable fault with the guitar's acoustic performance.

Plugged in to our house Schertler David and then a Fender Acoustic Pro, the Seagull's QIT performs well. It's not the most complex system we've ever come across, but the controls do what they're supposed to and it's not difficult to find a range of likeable and usable amplified tones.

Overall, the bright, woody acoustic tone is a delight, and whether it's strummed or finger-picked, the guitar responds admirably and capably. If pushed to find something to complain about, we'd have to point to the lack of case which, at this price point is a notable omission. That aside, we'd suggest spending some quality time with a Concert Hall soon. And, while you're at it, it'd be worth checking out the dreadnought and mini-jumbo. ■

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AW4000

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- Solid Mahogany back & sides
- Tortoiseshell binding
- Maple dot inlay
- Bone nut & saddle
- Grover® Open-gear tuners w/Butterbean knobs
- Thinner neck profile

Artwood

While testing many different materials in order to find a new sound for the Artwood guitar line, we came across a rare type of spruce that originates from the Caucasus Mountains. The combination of a Caucasian Spruce top and Mahogany back/sides helps emphasize a rich tone in the low-mid frequency range, helping the instrument cut through while strumming. It also offers a crisp and bluesy sound when finger-picking.

The AW4000 features a traditional look with a classic finish, tortoiseshell binding, open-gear tuners and a maple dot inlay, but also features a thinner neck profile to accommodate the modern player as well. This guitar will be an extension of your own voice. Play one yourself to hear it sing.

Ibanez
ibanez.com

CHECK MORE DETAIL OF IBANEZ AW4000 AT IBANEZ.COM

FENDER PARAMOUNT DELUXE PARLOUR

An all new series from the guitar giants with a focus on traditional design, all-solid construction and nary a Stratocaster headstock in sight

WORDS: SAM WISE **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

Full disclosure here: I am a Fender man, through and through. As a kid, drooling over guitars in the shop and in books and magazines, it was always Fenders. At 19, my first decent guitar was a Jazzmaster, and today there's still a Jazzmaster, and now a Tele, hung on the wall. Acoustically, however, Fender has never really had the same hold over the popular imagination that it has over the plank-spanking part of the guitar world. Fender's new Paramount series aims to put that right, with a solidly traditional look, and quality all-solid construction. They come in three sizes (Dreadnought, 000 and Parlour), and two trim levels. Our review model is the PM2 Deluxe Parlour, the smallest and only 12-fret model, at the higher level of trim.

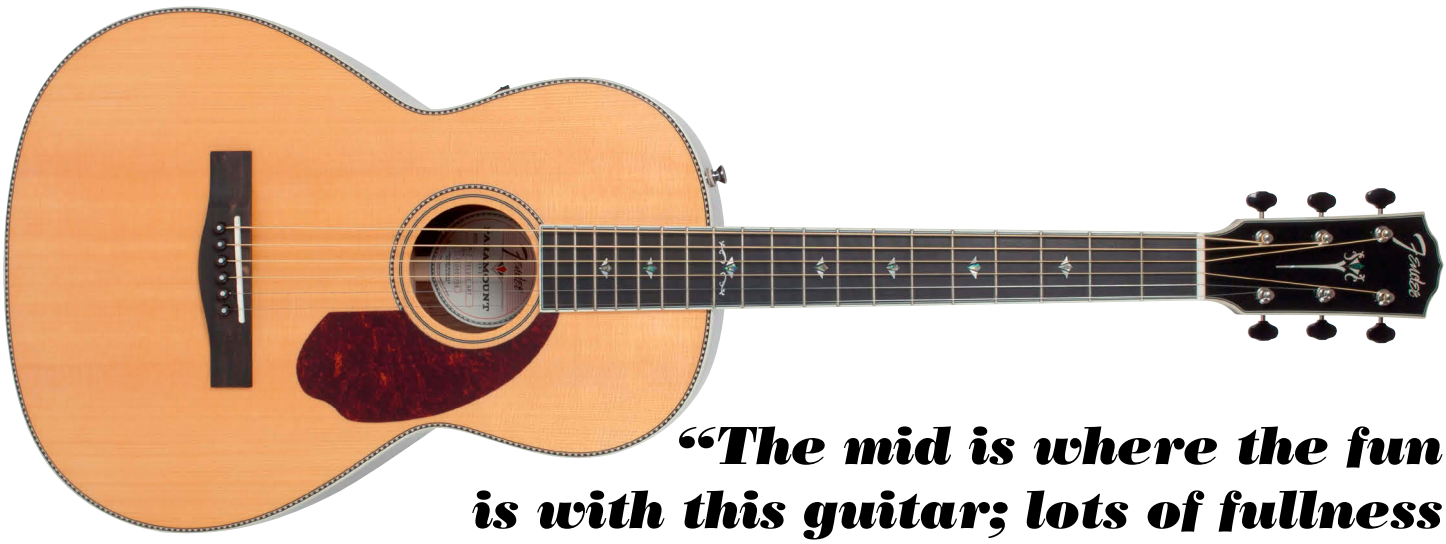
Fender's acoustics have often suffered from their attempts at differentiation; old-fashioned we may be, but few acoustic guitarists are keen on the Strat headstock atop a high quality box, for example. Here, Fender has gone for a resolutely traditional design, but with a few little touches to remind the user of the instrument's provenance. The top is solid sitka spruce, not the most evenly grained you'll ever see, but with wonderful cross-silking that catches the light. Both the purfling and the soundhole rosette are a vintage-looking checkerboard design, and the slightly cloud-like scratchplate echoes that of the Kingman acoustic series. The back and sides are East Indian rosewood, top and back bound in vintage off-white, and the checkerboard reappearing in the centre stripe on the back. The upper bout carries a head unit with volume, treble and bass, and a tuner and phase switch built into a small oval display. These controls are set into the wood, rather than into a plastic rectangle, and are all the better for it.

"Wearing vintage-style open-gear nickel tuners, the headstock looks straight from another age"

The mahogany neck, which joins the body at the 12th fret, vintage style, wears an ebony fingerboard with torch style abalone inlays. The 'board is bound again in vintage cream, and the fret job is well executed; slim-ish, vintage-style frets, well-seated with no sharp or rough edges. At either end of the relatively short scale (24.7 inch), there is bone in both nut and saddle, and the ebony bridge is equipped with abalone-dotted ebony pins. The bound headstock, based on the 70s F series, echoes the fretboard inlays in shape, and carries an early 40s style logo in abalone. Faced in ebony, and wearing vintage-style open-gear nickel tuners, the headstock looks straight from another age.

Indeed, the guitar overall has, despite its combination of styling cues from different decades, a convincingly vintage look. Indeed, without the preamp head unit, and with a layer of dust, I might have been convinced that this had been lurking at the back of a used guitar shop for many years; only the fact that I know Fender didn't make acoustics, or even exist, in the early 1900s would break the spell. Those who do like Fender's more contemporary take on acoustics may find this an unappealing guitar, but for me it really works – it's the first Fender acoustic guitar I've genuinely wanted to keep.

The quality is good too; like most instruments from Asia that hit our shores



"The mid is where the fun is with this guitar; lots of fullness and punch which works well for fingerstyle"

FENDER
PARAMOUNT DELUXE PARLOR

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Fender
Model: Paramount PM Deluxe
RRP: £629
Body Size: Parlour
Made In: China
Top: Solid Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Solid East Indian rosewood
Bridge: Ebony
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 19
Tuners: Open geared nickel
Nut Width: 43mm
Scale Length: 643mm
Onboard Electrics: Fender pre-amp
Strings Fitted: Fender Duratone 80/20 Bronze .12s
Gig Bag/Case Included: Fender hardcase

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

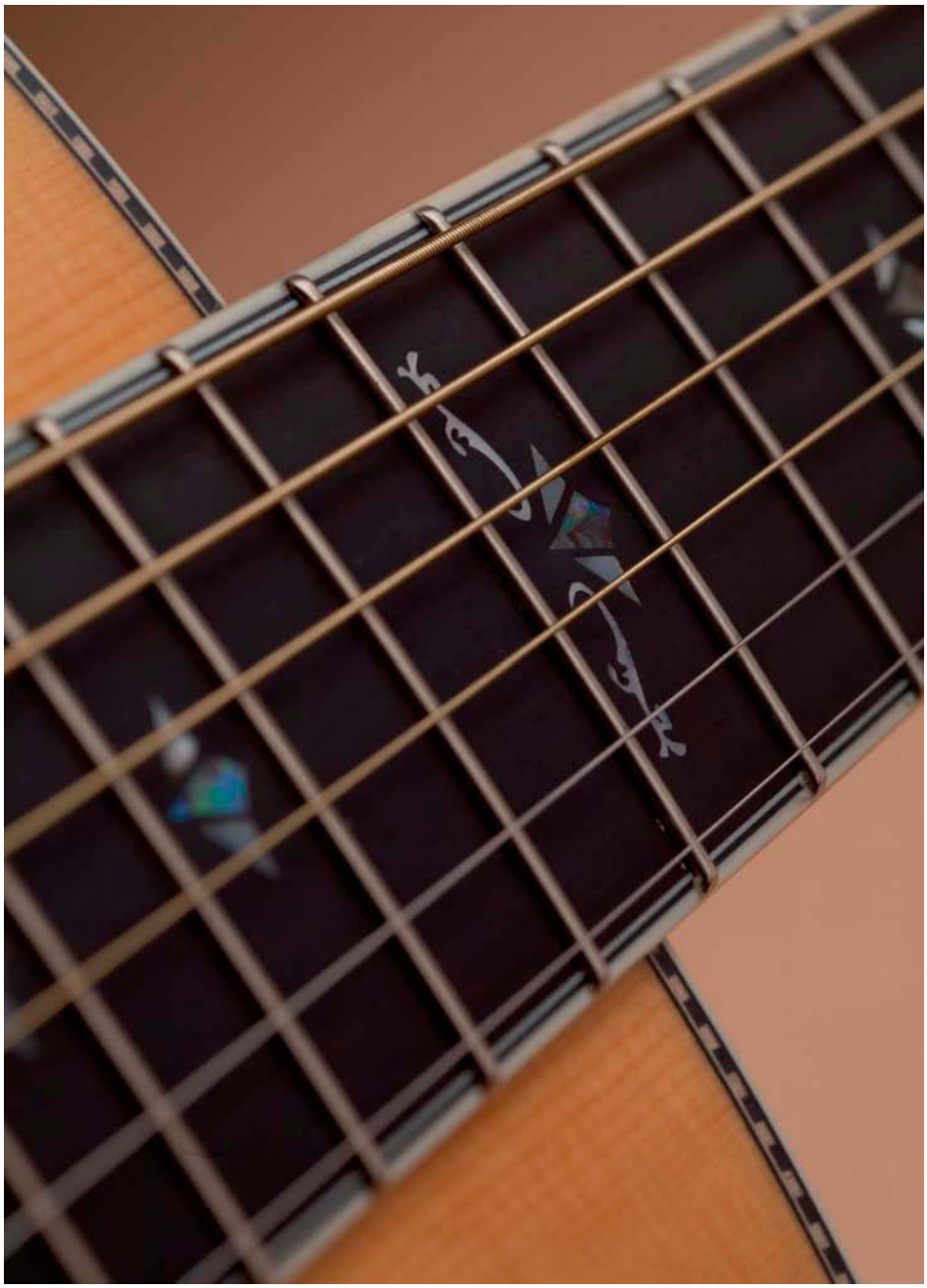
Pros: Vintage looks, good solid tone.
Cons: Action could be more even
Overall: A nice little fingerstyle companion that will make you feel classy

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪✩
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✩
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✩
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.fender.com



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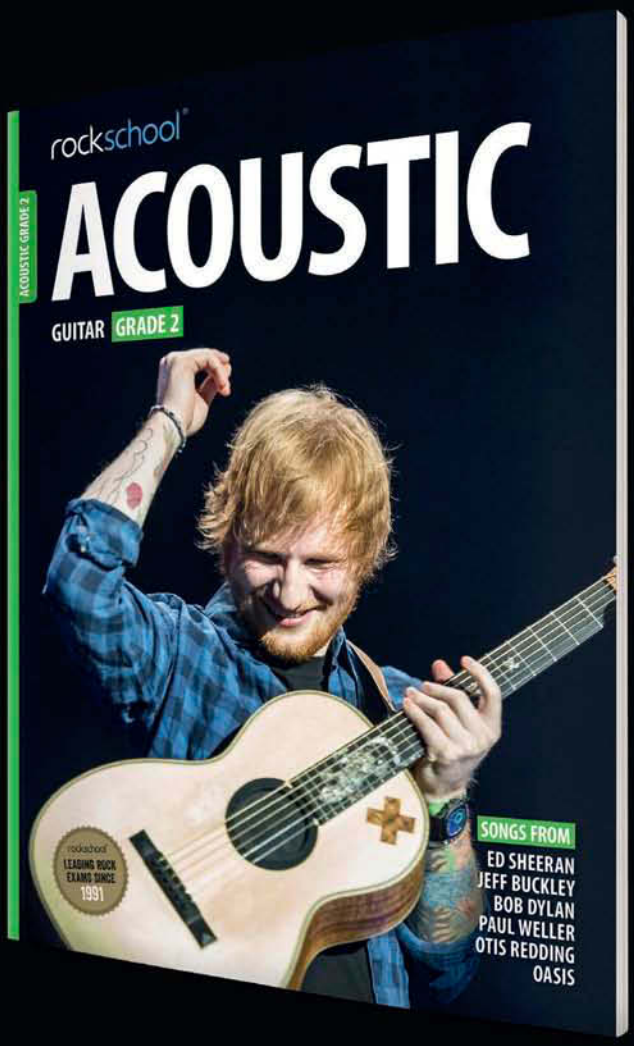

"What struck me about the tunes I had the opportunity to contribute to was that they were associated with Robert Johnson and Jimi Hendrix, two of most influential artists in the history of popular American music."

Mike Finnigan – performed with Jimi Hendrix, Etta James, Ringo Starr, Leonard Cohen, Rod Stewart and Tower of Power

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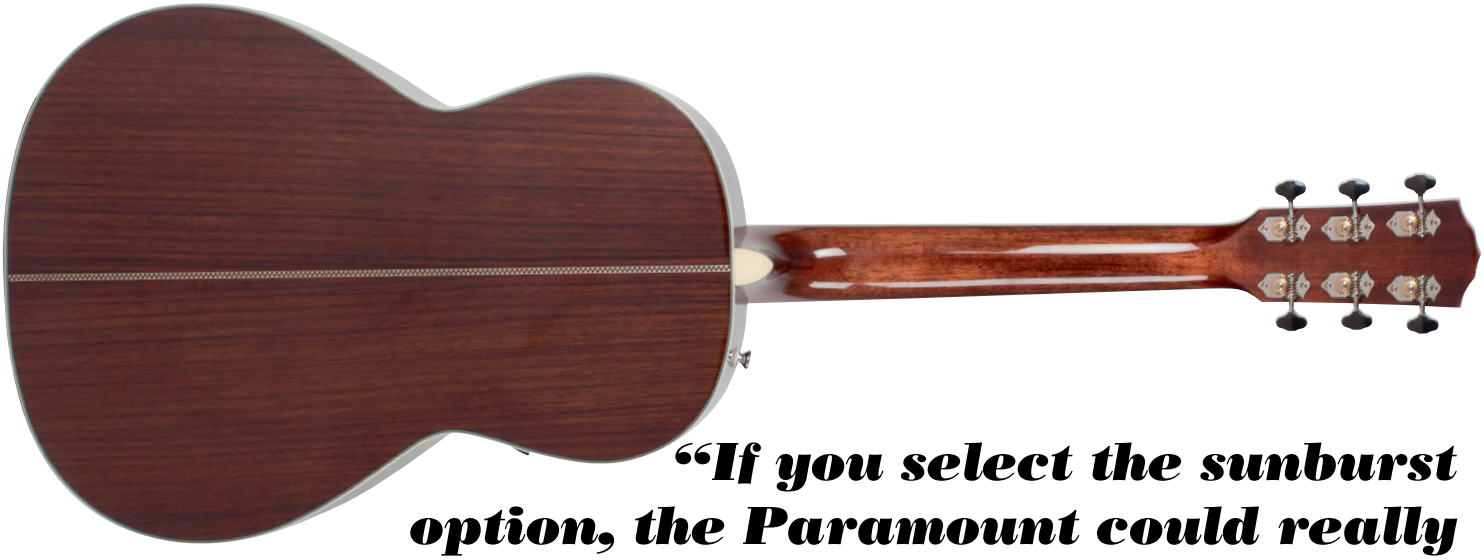

"If you select the sunburst option, the Paramount could really make you feel like a legendary bluesman"

these days, there is nothing to criticise in this Chinese-built Fender; it's almost becoming boring to discuss. If I had to pick holes, the action is a little uneven; low and slick at the nut, significantly higher by the 12th fret.

Like most parlours, the Paramount is an approachable little guitar. Small-bodied and slim-waisted, my singing partner, who struggles with larger-bodied acoustics, found it easy to wrangle. The neck is marginally chunkier than the usual D section, but a proper chunky vintage V profile might be more in keeping, and would please this pernickety reviewer. A 12-fret body join may give pause; there are certain pieces which become more challenging to play, and perhaps this will appeal to players who spend little time around and above the 12th.

Unlike some parlours, the Paramount doesn't have a reticent, quiet, indoor voice however; in fact, it's quite punchy. The 12-fret body join means there's extra soundboard real estate to offset the small size across the body, which helps keep the tone rounded. Spruce and rosewood will always be a crisp, bright combination, but the Paramount doesn't get carried away in that direction; there's plenty of sparkle in the top end, but it's a balanced tone. The mid is where most of the fun is with this guitar; lots of fullness and punch which works well for fingerstyle. The bass is decent; not as full as a larger soundboxed model, but not boxy or lacking, though the short scale may dissuade you from tuning the bottom string down to D. The guitar works well enough as a strummer if you don't need a huge panoramic tone, but it's picking that brings the best out of the Paramount. With a bit of bluegrass flatpicking this guitar can manage a good stinging tone if it needs to, but for us, this is a fingerstyle guitar first and foremost.

Plugged in, the tone is replicated well. There's a tiny bit of *piezo* ping, but the simple controls make it easy to control the tone; I wouldn't hesitate to gig this guitar.

The market for all solid instruments around the £600 price point is a competitive place to be, but Fender has got something here which could make an impact. The looks are all class – if you like the early years of the last century – and if you select the sunburst option, the Paramount could really make you feel like a legendary bluesman. Tonally, it's strong, if not the most differentiated in the entire world, and it's hard to imagine anyone being disappointed. If you're in the market for a decent all solid parlour guitar, you'd be a fool not to at least try one of these. ■

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Hardware:
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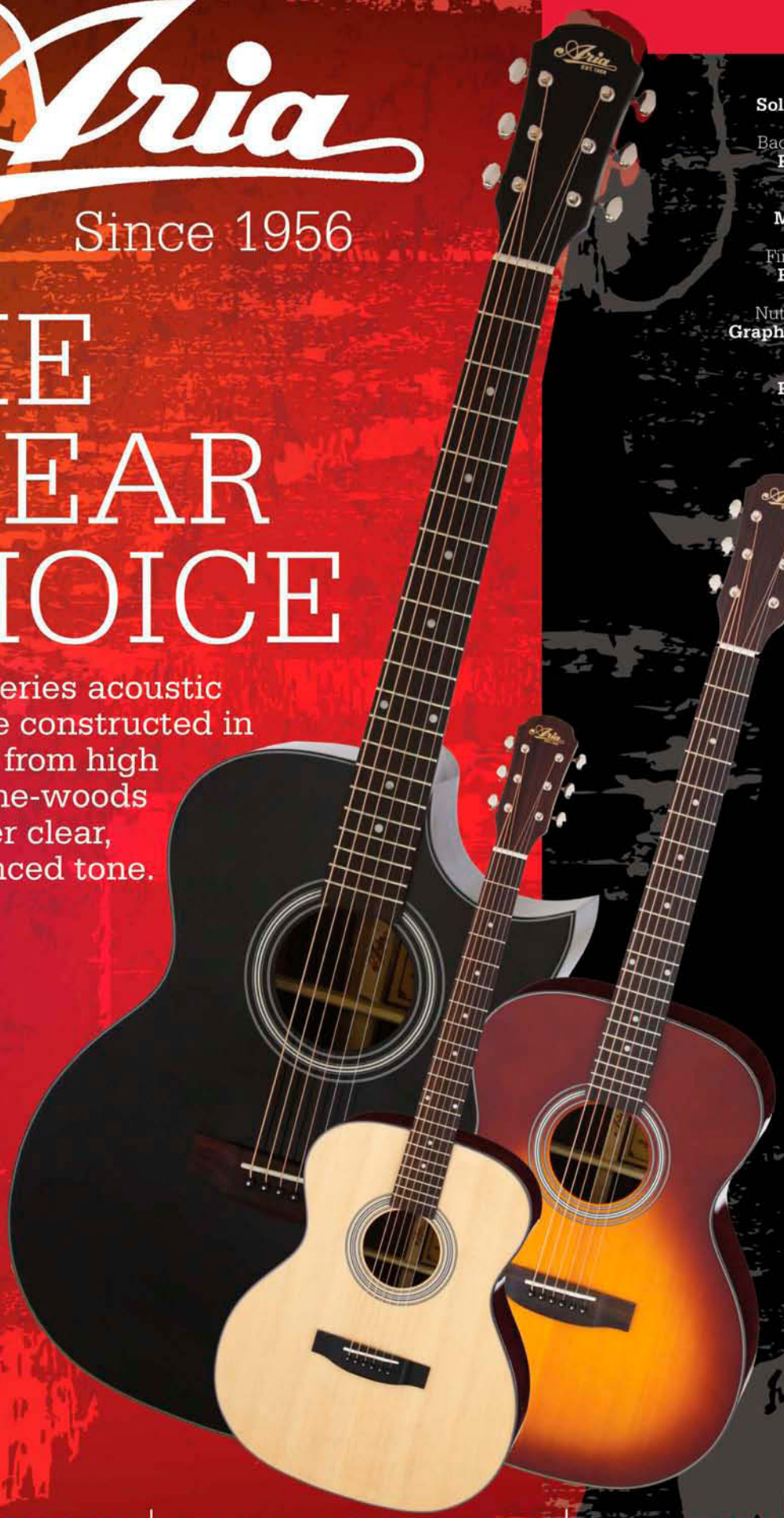

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FAITH
SIGNATURE MARS BLACK AND TAN BOG OAK

Alun Lower checks out a limited edition guitar that comes with 5,300 years of heritage...

WORDS: ALUN LOWER **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

We all like to feel like our guitar (or indeed, guitars) stand out from the crowd. Something with a unique talking point that sounds, plays and looks utterly fantastic. For some this may be a sparkly, fresh-faced new acquisition boasting exotic woods and a gloss so deep you could swim in it. For others it's a piece of history that has been worn in over decades of love and care. But what if you could have both of these things? Well Faith, alongside its chief designer and British luthier extraordinaire, Patrick James Eggle, has audaciously claimed to have done just that. Here we have a brand-new, ever-so-shiny modern dreadnought designed by one of our country's best guitar makers, partnered with a tonewood that has been carbon-dated to an astonishing 5,300 years old.

Now that you've checked that number at least a half-dozen times, let's take a closer look at this intriguing tonewood. If you ever wondered what rosewood, mahogany and ebony would look like combined into one, chances are it would come out looking something like this. Dark, smoky, detailed and tightly grained, the bog oak back and sides truly are a sight to behold. It's clearly a wonderful material and it might not stand out from a distance like a slice of flamed maple, but close up it oozes the kind of class that its showy cousin could only dream of. The binding also matches up wonderfully, though I never thought I'd come across a tonewood that made ebony look relatively light in hue by comparison.

The wonderful bog oak is partnered by a high-quality, tight-grained Engelmann spruce top. Personally I would have liked to see a bog oak rosette rather than the abalone, but this is a staple of the Faith range so is pretty much inevitable as a feature, and it still looks good nevertheless. The neck is made from mahogany as you would expect, topped once again with ebony and inlaid with Faith's ever-attractive 'F' logo at the 12th fret.

"Dark, smoky, detailed and tightly grained, the bog oak back and sides are a sight to behold... close up it oozes class"

The bracing of the guitar is constructed from piano-grade quarter-sawn spruce, fashioned into Patrick James Eggle's 'X-Brace' design, with nary a glimpse of glue to be seen. This is a tidy construction indeed, certainly good enough to bear the name of such a respected luthier. One criticism I do have, however – and really, it isn't much of one – is that the gloss finish covering the bulk of the instrument looks and feels the same quality as the other instruments in the Faith range. Normally, this would be a pro rather than a con, but then other Faith guitars cost considerably less than this. It's not a bad finish – not in any way. But it does come across like a factory-made, mid-range instrument if you keep your eyes closed. Like I said, it's an incredibly minor point – but I think that if you were spending the same money with some other brands, you would probably feel like you were holding something more expensive.

The other slight point of contention is the fact that this is a purely acoustic instrument. Obviously, this will not be a concern for many of you – but personally when I think of Faith I am often drawn to their excellent electros. Some of the finest I've ever tested, in fact. And certainly, to fit an electronics package that would do justice to a guitar like this would mean paying a good deal more money. But the fact remains that some people will be hoping for electro performance out of the box, and you won't find it here. If it doesn't bother you though, then it's really not worth a second thought.

"It's one of the most versatile and satisfying tones I've heard on a dreadnought in this price range"

FAITH
SIGNATURE MARS BLACK AND TAN BOG OAK

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Faith
Model: FSGRCBT
RRP: £1,999
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: Indonesia
Top: Solid red cedar
Back and Sides: Solid British black and tan bog oak
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Macassan striped ebony
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 640mm
Frets: 20
Tuners: Grover Nickel 18:1 ratio
Onboard Electrics: None
Strings Fitted: D'Addario EXP
Gig Bag/Case Included: Faith hardcase

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Supreme versatility and a character that will only grow over time. Superb
Cons: Lack of electronics and a slightly low-budget feel to the finishing
Overall: Utterly unique and very close to perfection

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪☆
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪◐
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

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"The bog oak will only get more wonderful with time, but it already has an utterly fabulous sound"

The downside with a guitar sporting so fascinating a tonewood is that there is a risk of unrealistic expectations being placed upon the tone. The bog oak may be 5,000 years old, but does it sound like a 5,000 year-old guitar? Well the rather predictable answer is no, of course it doesn't. Does that mean it disappoints? The answer again is no.

When dealing with high-end acoustics, naturally you can expect the wood to improve in sound as it ages. Often in reviews we say things like 'oh, when it opens up a bit more, it'll sound sublime'. And the same is very much true here – the bog oak will only get more wonderful with time, of that I am sure. But the fact is that it's already an utterly fabulous sound – as dark and fulsome in tone as it in looks, which says a lot. It takes the usual bold character of a dreadnought but adds so much more.

Played by hand first of all, the tone is warm and plummy, with sustain for days and a brooding, swirling and dark character that somehow transforms into a much brighter, sharper and more controlled sound when you progress further up the neck and up to the higher strings. There is just so much versatility to this guitar – I had wondered whether the darker nature of the tonewood would be a bit overpowering but it just seems to give way at the perfect moment, allowing you to access those shimmer highs without any trouble at all.

Flatpicking has a similarly versatile response, with the neck width comfortably allowing both styles of play – a feat that I'm often surprised more guitar manufacturers can't seem to manage.

With the FSGRBOG, Faith Guitars has come staggeringly close to perfection. Provided that you're happy to take extra care of it (you'll need to read up on humidity control), the bog oak construction is just so exciting and fascinating. Not only that, but it provides the platform for one of the most versatile and satisfying tones I've heard on a dreadnought in this price range. For all the superlatives I can throw its way, you really need to just get out there and try one for yourself to fully appreciate it. That won't be easy, as the scarcity of the tonewood naturally makes this guitar something of a rarity (in fact, there are only two made in this configuration).

Minor quibbles about choice of finish aside, this Mars is an astounding instrument – genuinely unique, wonderful to play and listen to, and fully capable of being your dream guitar. A piece of history in the making? You never know... ■

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NAMM® REPORT

We sent the Acoustic team through the vast halls of the Anaheim Convention Center to find the new gear that we think will make a splash this side of the pond in 2016

FENDER

In addition to the launch of the new Paramount series of acoustics (you can see a review on page 64), Fender has delved into the world of in-ear monitors (IEMs). The new range consists of five models (DXA1, FXA2, FXA5, FXA6 and FXA7) each with different spec and performance options. The IEMs come with a deluxe carry case, SureSeal tips assortment, a cleaning tool and cable.

www.fender.com

MARTIN GUITARS

New and special models from C.F Martin & Co. included the D-222, as seen on this issue's front cover, the D-28 John Lennon 75th Anniversary, included in our round-up of signature Dreadnoughts on page 44, and additions to the Authentic series (*pictured*). The 000-42 Authentic and 00-18 Authentic models are based on pre-war guitars with features including hide glue construction, a dovetail neck joint and an Adirondack spruce top.

www.martinguitar.com

SANTA CRUZ GUITAR COMPANY

Highlights from SCGC included an FTC Limited Edition model which has been brought back into production to mark the company's 40th anniversary. The idea for the resurrecting the model came after Richard Hoover was asked to restore a FTC from the 1980s for Eric Clapton. On display was a guitar constructed from 8,000-year-old oak and 3,000-year-old Sitka spruce.

www.santacruzguitar.com

YAMAHA GUITARS

As the FG series celebrates its 50th birthday, Yamaha launched the FG800 and FS800 series of guitars which offer updates and upgrades to what is already a highly successful and popular range. The new series includes nine models that offer different tonewood options. Cutaway electric versions of these models will be released later in 2016. Yamaha also introduced the limited edition, handcrafted FG180 celebrating the FG's anniversary.

uk.yamaha.com

DEERING BANJOS

While Mark Johnson and Tony Trischka played their signature models on the booth, Deering launched a new range of Artisan Goodtimes models aimed at making Deering banjos more affordable and accessible. Featuring a midnight maple fingerboard with pearloid inlays, models are expected to be available in the UK by April.

www.deeringbanjos.com

WASHBURN

An all-new line of guitars called the Heritage Series was introduced by Washburn. The range is split into four sectors; the 10, 20, 30 and 40 series. The differences are primarily based on the choice of back and side woods with the 10 being mahogany, 20 being rosewood, 30 being tamo ash black and the 40 being flame maple back and sides. Each individual series also comes in a range of body shapes. Prices range from £249 for the HD10S (pictured), through to £429 for the HJ40SCE. The first models are already in the UK and, by the time you read this, review samples will be at *Acoustic* Towers.

www.washburn.com

VINTAGE

Vintage Guitars has revamped its classic 'western' guitar model across both acoustic and electro-acoustic ranges, with newly designed construction and bracing patterns resulting in a brighter, livelier sound. The Vintage V501 is an acoustic dreadnought made with a solid Sitka spruce top and mahogany back and sides. The V501 also benefits from Graph Tech NuBone saddle and die-cast chrome machine heads for improved intonation and stable tuning. Retail price £179. The VEC501 is an electro-acoustic cutaway dreadnought fitted with a Fishman Sonicore USP and Isys+ preamp. RRP £249.

www.jhs.co.uk

G7TH

G7th launched the Performance 2 Limelight capo, which has been finished with a custom, smoky-blue finish designed to reflect stage lighting in a mirror-scratchplate sort of way! Be quick though. Only limited quantities are available. RRP £39.95

www.g7th.com

ACUS

Acus launched two new amps, the 5T and 6T (pictured). The 6T boasts 130-watts, three inputs (two Mic-Line and one Line), a three-band EQ and Effects Send. RRP £549.
www.acus-sound.it

TAYLOR

Hot on the heels of voicing and design refinements to its 600, 800 and 900 Series models, Taylor Guitars has breathed new life into its 300 and 500 Series guitars. The reworked guitars include new tonewoods and, in the case of the 500 Series, revised 'Performance' bracing for enhanced tone. The new tonewoods on offer are due in part to Taylor's ongoing programme of responsible farming and utilising sustainable materials. The 300 Series, for example, has introduced Tasmanian blackwood which, according to Taylor Guitars' master guitar designer Andy Powers (*pictured*), offers a "strong mid-range focus with a touch of top-end shimmer and richness reminiscent of koa and rosewood." Taylor has also launched an expanded range of new 12-string guitars including 12-fret Grand Concerts 552ce and 562ce. Review models are already on their way to *Acoustic* HQ, although having been given a sneak preview, we can report that you should be prepared for your socks to be blown off.
www.taylorguitars.com

RIVERSONG GUITARS

This stunning piece from Riversong's Vault series caught our eye. Sumptuous wood selections combined with high standards of craftsmanship and revolutionary construction techniques come together to create this one-off piece.
www.riversongguitars.com

IBANEZ

Based on the popularity of the all-mahogany instruments from its Artwood range, Ibanez has developed a 3/4–size mini-dreadnought. Perfect for smaller hands and as a traveling companion, the AW54MINIOPN boasts a solid-top and open-pore finish for that 'earthy' feel.
www.ibanez.com

FAITH GUITARS

Catching our eye on the Faith stand was this 'new-for-2016' Venus cutaway bodied 'Blood Moon' made from a highly-figured cut of Trembesi for the top, back and sides. Trembesi instruments perform similarly to mahogany and deliver warmth and balance across the dynamic range.
www.faithguitars.com

TIMBER TONES

Timber Tones was kept busy at the show with a wide range of specialist picks made from exotic timbers and materials. New products feature laser-etched grip patterns. Look out for a special feature on the tonal effect of tonewood picks coming soon.
www.timber-tones.com

EDEN

Eden launched an ultra-compact amp specifically voiced for ukulele. The E-Uke has both ¼" and XLR jacks, an 8" 35-watt speaker, EQ sweep, tone control, stereo media input and headphone output making it ideal for home and onstage users alike.
www.edenamps.com

LOGJAM

UK-based Logjam continues to add to their range of award-winning foot-stompers with the Logarhythm 4, Microlog 2, and Travelog 2. Prices range from £54.95 to £74.95. Watch out for review features in *Acoustic* soon.
www.logjam.net

LUNA GUITARS

Luna Guitars unveiled its new Tribal series of ukuleles. The range combines the best of traditional profile and wood selection with Hawaiian body ornamentation and artwork that harks back to traditional Pacific carvings.
www.lunaguitars.com

AGS GUITAR STRAPS

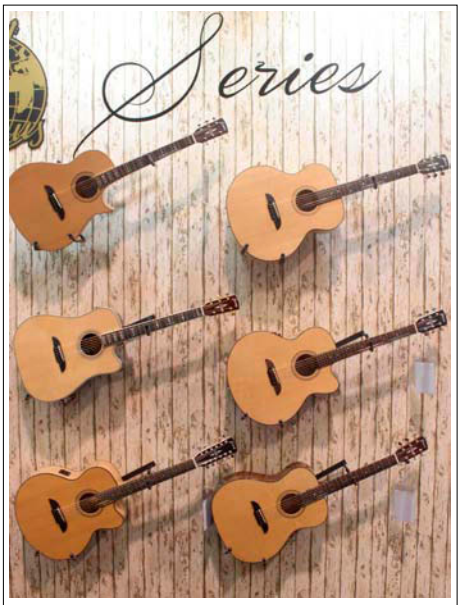
NAMM newcomers, London-based AGS Guitar Straps showed new designs and finishes to their Premium, Comfort and Vintage ranges of luxury straps. All products are painstakingly handmade and can be customised to specific requests and requirements.
www.agstrap.com

CORT

Cort's Grand Auditorium range (as reviewed in *Acoustic* 112) has been renamed Grand Regal and offers a range of upgrades, finishes, onboard electrics and, on some models, three-piece backs. Full review features on new these new models will be published soon.
www.cortguitars.com

SEAGULL

Canadian-made Seagull launched a raft of new guitars which will soon be available in the UK. Models of particular interest were the cedar-topped S6 Concert Hall (£499), Concert Hall Performer (£649) and the S6 Original (£469). All models feature a solid top and are offered in a striking Burnt Umber finish. Models will be appearing in the UK soon and full review features are in the pipeline.
www.seagullguitars.com



FRAMUS

Framus' Legacy series has now been expanded to include 12-string, cutaways, left-handed, maple jumbo and mahogany jumbo models.
www.framus.de

PILGRIM

Pilgrim's Morning Star range features four distinct models that combine classic looks with fine tonewoods and premium hardware. The new range also features a uniquely dimensioned bell brass tubular section developed by Paul Tebbutt to accurately recreate clarity, projection and tonal purity. The VPB1005 five-string open back banjo comes with a solid maple/flamed maple shell with ebony cap, flamed maple neck and ebony fingerboard. RRP £899.
www.jhs.co.uk/pilgrimbanjos

LOWDEN

The wonders displayed by Lowden included two very special models; the Wee Lowden 35 Fan Fret and the all-new Jon Gomm signature model. The exquisite Wee Lowden is made with Indian rosewood for the back and sides and Redwood top. The model also features onboard electronics in the form of an LR Baggs Anthem system. RRP is £4,030. The Jon Gomm signature model has been developed in close association with the fingerstyle wizard and features a hybrid cedar and spruce soundboard with American black cherry back and sides. The model also features two Keith banjo tuners per Jon's own Lowden guitar and, with all upgrades and pick-up fitted, will retail at £4,200.
www.lowdenguitars.com

STOMPLIGHT

Here's a great new product for gigging musicians: Stomplight. Designed to fit onto your pedalboard or standalone at the base of the microphone stand, Stomplight is essentially a stompbox-sized, portable uplighter that breathes life into dimly-lit stages with a controllable lightshow. The unit boasts various features including a built-in microphone with an adjustable input gain which allows the lighting to be sync'd with the music. One to watch for 2016 for sure.
www.stomplight.com

ASHDOWN

Famed for their extensive range of bass amplification, the B-Social is a clever and 75-watt stereo desktop amp with wireless connectivity, Bluetooth music streaming, and Apptek USB DAW connectivity. This good-looking unit has far too many features and uses to list here, but we think the B-Social was one of the stars of the show and will have massive appeal to acoustic guitar players for its functionality and portability. Look out for a full review in *Acoustic* soon.
www.ashdownmusic.com

COLE CLARK

Australian-based Cole Clark highlighted new guitars that adhere to the company's philosophy and approach to green issues. The Eco series is made from 100 per cent sustainable timbers and have been designed by replacing endangered woods with substitutes. For example, an indigenous timber called Blackbean has been used in place of rosewood, though it's claimed the tone is very similar.

www.coleclarkguitars.com

PRS

PRS Guitars' drool-fest included four stunning SE models: the SE A10E, SE A20E, SE A30E and SE Alex Lifeson. All models are solid top and feature the Angelus cutaway body shape. The A10 is an all-mahogany affair, the A20E is spruce/mahogany and the A30 spruce/rosewood. The Lifeson model is a thinline body with 'Birds In Flight' fingerboard inlays.

www.prsguitars.com

TAKAMINE

Takamine's TT Series was expanded with four more 'Thermal Top' guitars. The EF740S TT, CP7MO TT, EF450C TT BSB (Brown Sunburst), and EF450C TT TBB (Transparent Black Burst). As with all guitars in the Thermal Top range, the spruce guitar tops are baked in an oxygen-free vacuum environment before the guitar is constructed. The process results in the guitar offering an 'older', vintage tone.

www.takamine.com

MICHAEL KELLY

Michael Kelly Guitars showed a range of new finishes and appointments including guitars with both bound and unbound soundports on the upper bout, and a 10-string model which only has twin-course strings up to the D-string. This leaves the E- and A-strings freer for thumb-bass fingerpicking styles. Models should be in UK stores by the beginning of March.

www.michaelkellyguitars.com

D'ADDARIO

D'Addario's extensive range of strings for acoustic guitar were extended with the release of a new set: the uncoated Nickel Bronze series. The new strings feature the combination of nickel-plated phosphor bronze wrapped around a high carbon NY steel core. Nickel Bronze are in the UK now and will be available in Extra Light (.010-.047), Custom Light (.011-.052), Light (.012-.053), Light Top/Med Bottom (.012-.056), and Medium (.013-0.56). RRP £11.49.

www.daddario.com

EASTMAN GUITARS

Eastman Guitars introduced several new models at the show including the flagship Traditional E40D dreadnoughts (pictured). Models are available in both natural and sunburst finishes with high-quality Adirondack spruce tops and eye-catching hand-inlaid abalone adornments. Eastman also launched new cutaway models in the all-solid sapele series which come loaded with Fishman Sonitone electronics. New to the 300 mandolin series is the MD304; an A-style mandolin with an oval soundhole.

www.eastmanguitars.com

RETUNE YOUR EARS

Presenting new, interesting or alternative musicians. Listen to something different, with ***Paul Strange***

©Jo Elkington

JOHN WHITELY

STYLE… (FOLK)

Ninebarrow are a vocal harmony duo comprising me and Jay LaBouchardiere. We formed in 2012, and we'd identify ourselves as a 'folk' act – our sound and style have been heavily influenced by the folk tradition. We love reworking traditional material, and most of our original stuff is pretty rooted in history, landscape and legend. We're based in Dorset, and wanted a band name that originated in the landscape – Nine Barrow Down is a chalk ridge in the Purbeck Hills. Our second album, *Releasing The Leaves*, comes out in March. The title is a line from my favourite track, 'Blood On The Hillside'. I love the swell of the strings and the piano at the end. My main instrument is the piano, but I took up the ukulele in 2012 and taught myself to play through experimentation and YouTube. I currently play a solid mahogany Pono MTD tenor ukulele, a Paul Hathway long-scale tenor mandola with mahogany back and sides and a spruce top, and an Oakwood octave mandola with hyedua back and sides and spruce top, plus a Lorenzo reed organ. The Pono is probably my favourite – it has a beautiful clarity and brightness, but also depth of tone. I play through an Orchid Electronics preamp, a Source Audio EQ pedal, a Boss OC-3 octave pedal and an Electro-Harmonix Cathedral reverb pedal. For live performances I also use a Logjam Logarhythm stomp box. With the uke and the mandolas I use a variety of styles – from strumming to finger picking to slapping. Alternate tunings? I use a low G on my uke, which gives it a much warmer, deeper tone and allows much easier finger picking. Sometimes I also drop the A or the E (on the tenor and octave mandolas, respectively) to get a more open tuning. We've got our album launch concert in Poole on 26 March and then we're playing in Bradford, Tonbridge, St Neots, Walsall and Waveney before the Sing In The Spring Festival in Evesham.

www.ninebarrow.co.uk

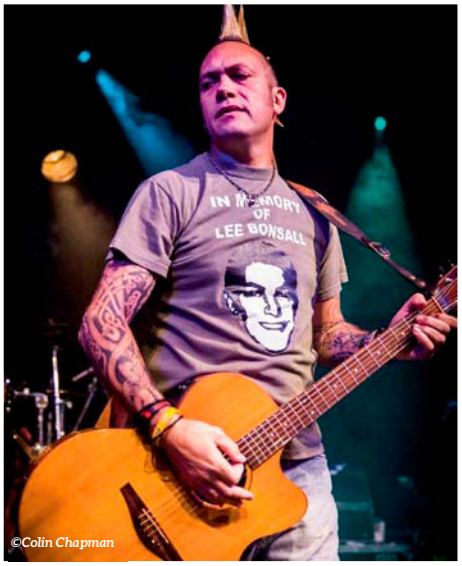
©Neil Krug

ANDERSON EAST

STYLE… (RHYTHM AND BLUES)

I'm a singer/songwriter based in Nashville, and I'd describe my music as Southern rhythm and blues. I write about love and love lost – I like music that makes somebody feel something. My new album, *Delilah*, is about to come out in the UK – it's been out in the States for a while now. It's my first album for Atlantic, and it's nice to have a good team behind me and to know there are people who believe in what I do. Is there a theme? My life at 26 years old. The album was recorded at Fame Studios, and you could smell 50 years of sweat and cigarettes in the room. My favourite tracks are 'What A Woman Wants To Hear' – I'm proud of it lyrically – and 'Satisfy Me', because I wrote it with two of my best friends, Charlie Pate and Aaron Raitiere. I currently play one of the new Martin D-18s – I played a 1968 D-28 for years, but it scares me to take that one out on the road, so the new one has replaced it. It's been my favourite guitar to date – I like it because it sounds like a record. I play through a Fishman Aura pickup. I also use a 1964 Gibson Falcon amp. I love my very first electric, a blue JD Fender Telecaster. I got it when I was 12. I taught myself – I used to learn the songs that were in the back of *Guitar World* and *Guitar Player* magazines. I play pick and fingerstyle, and I use Open E a lot. Right now I'm just focusing on writing for a new record. Does an acoustic guitar help me compose new songs? Of course, but I also love writing on electric guitar. I think acoustics and electrics inspire me differently. It just depends on what kind of song I am in the mood to write. What inspires my songwriting? Life and broken hearts and being in love with being in love.

www.andersoneast.com



©Colin Chapman

KEN BONSALL

STYLE… (FOLK-PUNK/SKA)

Ferocious Dog will always be an unsigned band. This is something we're proud of and it means we have total control over our music. Based in Nottingham, we first formed in the early 1990s, and focus mostly on left-wing politics and historical injustices. We play all different styles: ska, reggae, folk, eastern European folk, traditional Irish folk, rock and punk. Dan Booth (violin) and I (guitar) have played in the band from the start. Ellis Waring (mandolin, banjo, acoustic guitar) joined the band about five years ago, and John Alexander (bass) two years ago. Scott Walters (drums) and Les Carter (electric guitar) joined just before the recording of our new album *From Without*. The title is straight from the teachings of Karl Marx. It means that, if you want real revolution, you can only achieve this with help from without your social standing – the middle classes need the working classes and vice versa. I have many favourite tracks, but 'Slow Motion Suicide' sticks out. It's about the knock-on effect of coal miners losing their year-long strike, their jobs and their livelihoods and also losing pride and turning to drink. I'm a self-taught guitarist. I first learned to play with my fingers but then had to relearn using a pick as I'm a rhythm guitarist. My regular instrument is an Avalon Silver series AS100CE electro-acoustic, with cutaway. I like it because it stays in tune, has a great pickup and acoustically sounds awesome. It's by far the best guitar I've had – I don't do it justice. My back-up guitar is a Tanglewood Rosewood Grand Reserve Model TGRSF CE VS electro-acoustic jumbo with cutaway, but it's very rarely used as the Avalon is so good and never lets me down. I never use any pedals and always DI. We're about to record an acoustic version of the album, then a few gigs around the country in March and April to get up to gigging mode for the start of the festival season.

www.ferociousdog.co.uk

©Sean Purser

JAMES FAGAN

STYLE…(FOLK)

I'm an Australian folk singer, bouzouki player and guitarist living in Sheffield with my wife, folk singer Nancy Kerr. The James Brothers is my most recent duo, with Dumfriesshire-based New Zealander Jamie McClennan on fiddle, guitar and vocals. We sing folk songs from the Australian and New Zealand repertoire, so the focus is naturally on songs of shearers, drovers, bushrangers and natural disasters. With our debut album, *The James Brothers*, we wanted to capture the fun of one of our live shows and I think we've come close to that. It's early days, but the response has been great, and it's starting to get radio play. My favourite track is 'The Ballad Of Ned Kelly' – I love the two-guitar sound and harmony vocals. My regular instrument is a Stefan Sobell custom-made acoustic guitar-shaped bouzouki, with eight strings tuned in unison pairs. It's made of Indian rosewood, with a mahogany neck and spruce top. It's just so well made – in 16 years I've never had to have a single adjustment and it has superb intonation and resonance all the way up the neck. I play it through a Highlander pickup into a Highlander Pro Acoustic Mix DI. My standard pedals are a Boss tuner and an OC-3 Octaver and I use DiMarzio cables. I play with a pick – it's pretty much essential on a double-strung bouzouki. I've also recently bought a beautiful Malaysian blackwood guitar by Rory Dowling of Taran Guitars. Alternate tunings? I play GDAD on the bouzouki and mostly drop D on the guitar. When I'm writing, I find swapping instruments helps to unlock new ideas. Tunes seem to pop into my head, usually whole. I then whistle them on to my phone voice memo to capture them, putting them on to the guitar later. This year the James Brothers will tour the UK, and I'm recording a new album with Nancy Kerr and the Sweet Visitor Band, plus a new Melrose Quartet album.

www.thejamesbrothers.co.uk

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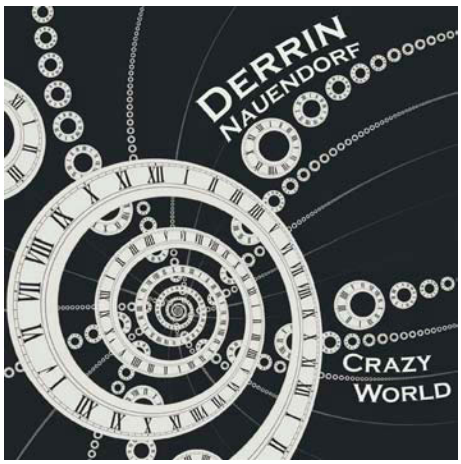
LOWRI EVANS
EVERYONE IS FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE
WWW.LOWRIEVANS.CO.UK

The second album from Welsh singer Lowri Evans finds her once again exploring the tangled twists and turns of the human condition, her songs liberally dosed with references to sleepless nights and unrequited love. Lowri has one of those enchanting gentle voices that makes you want to ring the girl up and assure her it'll be fine. Lowri's delicately picked acoustic guitar supplies the framework for the songs, highlights include the folky, winsome 'Stars' and the rocking country twang of 'Who's Loving You Tonight', which are complete with splashes of electric guitar from Lee Mason. Music for lonely bedsits the world over. **JP**

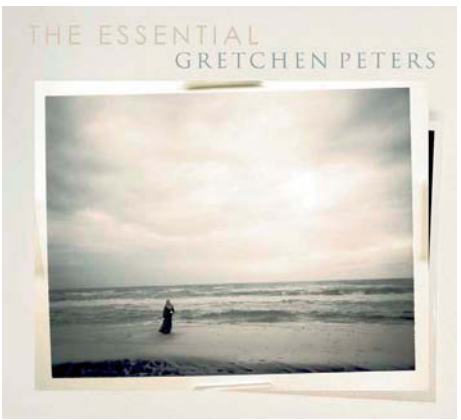
DAVE ALVIN AND PHIL ALVIN
LOST TIME
WWW.DAVEALVIN.NET

Following hard on the heels of last year's Big Bill Broonzy tribute album, a release which won them a Grammy nomination, the talented Alvin brothers have pulled off an album that kicks from start to finish. Plundering their memory vaults from the pre-Blasters days, old chestnuts like 'Rattlesnaking Daddy' and James Brown's 'Please, Please, Please' are jump started into hip shaking life. It's all a long way from Dave Alvin's acoustic solo career, but the contrast between Dave's whisky-soaked vocals on the boogie 'Sit Down Baby' and Phil's edgy Rockabilly growl, makes you wonder why they don't do this more often. **JP**



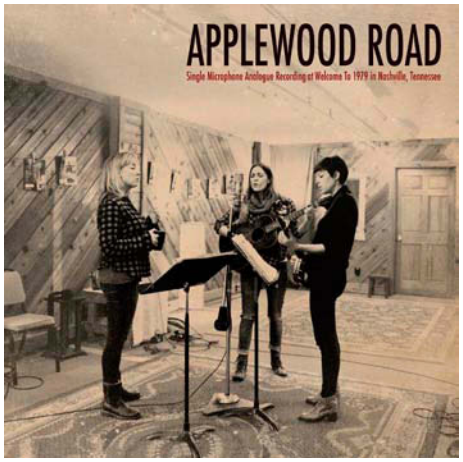
DERRIN NAUENDORF
CRAZY WORLD
WWW.DERRINNAUENDORF.COM

Featuring some dazzling finger blistering runs from Luca Stricagnoli (who wowed the crowd at last year's London Acoustic Show) and his percussive slapped guitar, Australian singer Derrin Nauendorf breathes life into an energetic take of 'Sixteen Tons' – no easy matter. Things cool down for 'Flying Land' before Derrin displays some impressive fretwork of his own on the title track, and a fiery warp speed version of the Temptations' 'Papa Was A Rolling Stone'. Impossible to categorise, but maybe there's no need to try: fine guitar playing and Derrin's song writing, puts him well ahead of the pack. **JP**



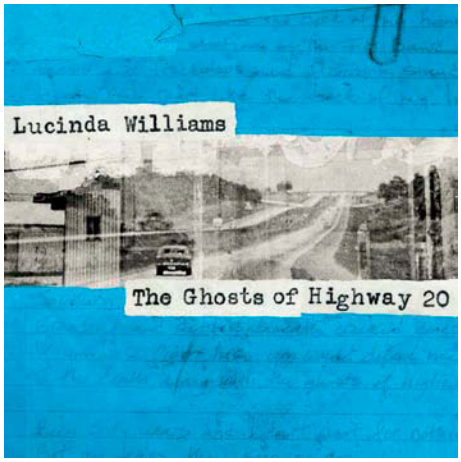
GRETCHEN PETERS
THE ESSENTIAL GRETCHEN PETERS
WWW.GRETCHENPETERS.COM

When you've the kind of impressive track record that Gretchen Peters can boast it can't be easy to put together an adequate retrospective. But on this showing the girl's done well. This double CD set begins with a chugging, dark guitar introducing 'Blackbirds', a disquieting murder ballad. Thankfully from there on in the mood lifts, and highlights – of which there are many – include a sensitive acoustic version of 'Independence Day', a take of the Stones 'Wild Horses' featuring Matraca Berg and Suzy Bogguss, with Brian Adams adding some superb harmonies to 'When You Love Someone.' Peerless songs from a lady who's a master of her craft. **JP**



APPLEWOOD ROAD
APPLEWOOD ROAD
WWW.APPLEWOODROADMUSIC.COM

The sparse double bass that brings in the title song frames the siren-like harmonies of Emily Barker, Amber Rubarth and Amy Speace on an album conceived in an East Nashville café and recorded live on vintage analogue gear. The minimal instrumentation – a banjo behind the girls on the appropriately titled 'Old Time Country Song', light percussion and guitar on 'Honey Won't You' – gives the proceedings an organic feel, which, like all the best music, teeters on the edge of disaster. It's all been done before of course, but there's a sincerity and charm about the way this has been produced, that lifts it well above the heads of the contenders. **JP**



LUCINDA WILLIAMS
THE GHOSTS OF HIGHWAY 20
WWW.LUCINDAWILLIAMS.COM

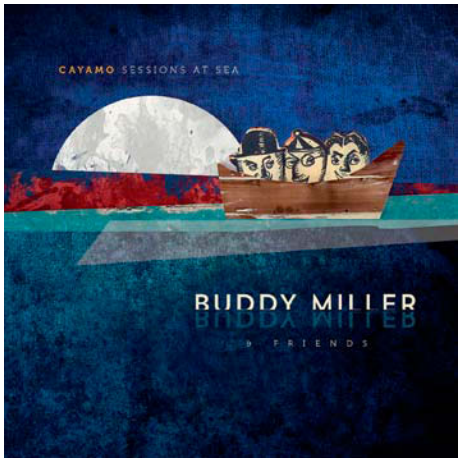
What an unmitigated joy to hear this latest double set from Ms Williams, whose creativity never seems to run out of steam, and has the good taste to surround herself with master players like Bill Frisell and Greg Leisz. And make no mistake as much as it's Lucinda's glorious, heartbroken vocals that grab you by the emotional heartstrings, as she cruises the wrecks on her highway, this is also a great guitar album. From the mysterious opening ethereal chimes and swooning slides that set the scene for 'Dust', Frisell and Leisz just never let up. Superb seems hardly an adequate adjective. JP

THE PRETTIOTS
FUN'S COOL
WWW.THEPRETTIOTS.COM

'I like to talk about Werner Herzog and sex' is an interesting byline from New Yorker Kay Kasparhauser, who, with Lulu Prat, make up the the Prettiots. The pair look more like a couple of death metal converts than purveyors of girlie pop, but that is actually what this is all about, and it's all rather cute.' 'Boys (That I Dated In Highschool) is a song about exactly that, while happy ukulele melodies, great lines and baffling songs like the rumpety tumpety 'Kiss Me Kinski', contrast with the occasional dark moments of 'Suicide Hotline', making this a weird and totally engaging trip. **JP**

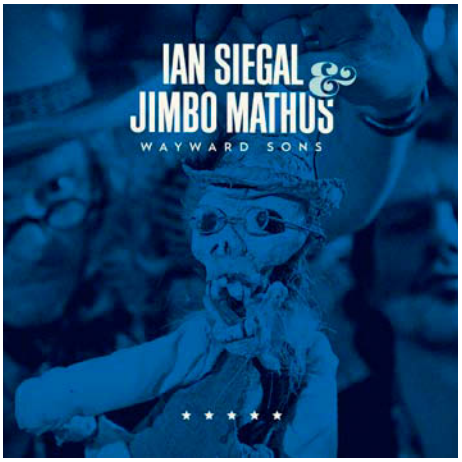
CAM PENNER
SEX & POLITICS
WWW.CAMPENNER.COM

Recorded in his backwoods studio in British Columbia, once again Cam Penner and his master of ambient guitar Jon Wood, take the listener on a glorious sonic excursion that is at times a thing of beauty, at others downright scary, but always totally spellbinding. A moody harmonium introduces the enchanting 'I'm Calling Out', before a contorted sample and thumping drum introduce 'I Believe', a song that gradually morphs into a kind of psychotic wig out. It's these shifting contrasts, dark and light, loud and soft, that make the pair's music so mesmerising. It's all totally glorious, totally unique and maybe as fine as music's likely to get in 2016. Remember where you heard it first. **JP**



BUDDY MILLER & FRIENDS
CAYAMO SESSIONS
WWW.BUDDYMILLER.COM

Joel Guzman's wheezing accordion and Buddy's harmonies, back up Lee Ann Womack's high and lonesome singing on 'After The Fire Is Gone', the start of this set recorded over three years a cruise ship in the Caribbean. On what must have been a serious hoe down for all concerned, veterans Kris Kristofferson and Lucinda Williams rub musical shoulders with a host of division one country names including new kid on the block Kacey Musgraves, Richard Thompson and Shawn Colvin. With Buddy at the helm of a crack band, as you'd expect this is fine stuff, and on this showing a blast for all concerned. **JP**



IAN SIEGAL & JIMBO MATHUS
WAYWARD SONS
WWW.IANSIEGAL.COM

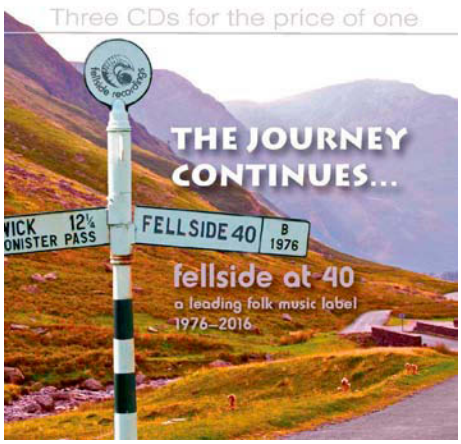
Maybe there's a time in the career of every bluesman when the blues fade into red, and the allure of the wider musical church beckons? On this showing it certainly seems to be the case with these two transatlantic cousins. Here they are boisterously hammering out 'Casey Jones' and 'Goodnight Irene', alongside Townes Van Zandt's laconic 'Heavenly Houseboat Blues'. Recorded live complete with some priceless onstage banter, there's no mistaking the chemistry between these two guys, or the stellar musicianship. **JP**

BEN HUNTER & JOE SEAMONS

TAKE YO TIME

WWW.BENJOEMUSIC.COM

Inspired by the fevered period in musical evolution when fiddlers, guitarists, banjo players and hobos rambled the dusty back roads of North America, Ben and Joe do their best to recreate those heady times – and it works. So we find Blind Willie McTell's sleazy 'Broke Down Engine' nestling comfortably alongside a jazzy take of Duke Ellington's 'Jungle Nights In Harlem' and Doc Watson's 'Beaumont Rag', all anchored by the guys' good time feel. There are many gems here, so forget notions of musical barriers, push back the chairs and break out the hooch. **JP**

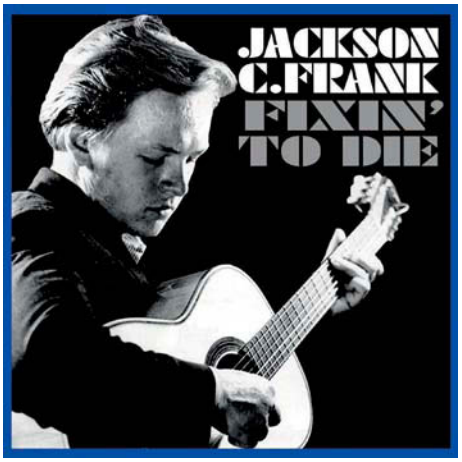


FELLSIDE AT 40

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

WWW.FELLSIDE.COM

Spread over three CDs, the enterprising Cumbrian folk label have come up with a tremendous feast of goodies. Many of the names, like Martin Carthy, Dave Swarbrick and John Kirkpatrick, are familiar voices on the folk scene. But what will make the compilation endearing to many, is the inclusion of quirky tracks like Frankie Armstrong's warbling music hall rendition of 'Madeleine' and the stomping 'Jungle Queen' by the Maerlock Big Band, an ensemble weaving dangerously between Ceilidh madness and jazzy Becker Brothers horn chord sequences – and that's just disc one! A priceless bargain in all ways. Long may they prosper. **JP**



JACKSON C. FRANK

FIXIN' TO DIE

WWW.SECRETRECORDSLIMITED.COM

A familiar figure on the 1960s London folk scene, this troubled American singer was a seminal influence on John Renbourn and Bert Jansch, both of whom included Frank's beautiful, haunting ballad 'Blues Run The Game' in their set lists until the end. Possessed of a voice that strangely recalls Paul Simon's own – he produced Frank's only album until now – this intriguing compilation largely culled from home recordings, proves just what the fuss was about. Highlights include the suitably spooky 'Halloween Is Black As Night', the weighty 'Child Fixin' To Die' and the lustful 'Maria Spanish Rose'. Expect some great cover versions in a folk club near you soon. **JP**

SHEESHAM & LOTUS & SON

78RPM

WWW.SHEESHAMANDLOTUS.COM

Well it's not – a 78rpm that is – but these guys have Settled for recording their dusty old timey music in single takes cut directly onto a lacquer disc using a 1937 recording lathe. And the results are uncanny. Whether it's the stomping fiddle led breakdown of 'Truly Understood', with the tuba thumping along with a clattering banjo, the shards of beefy harmonica on 'John Henry', or the guys' deranged vocals sounding like they've hit the white lightning, the album's a marvelous reincarnation of the glory days of early music. **JP**

MALCOLM HOLCOMBE

ANOTHER BLACK HOLE

WWW.MALCOLMHOLCOMBE.COM

The ability to glorify the mundane, the every day struggles and heartbreaks has long been the mark of the truly great songwriter, and once again Malcolm Holcombe's doing it better than most. With his usual stellar gang of desperadoes on hand – Ken Coomer on drums, bassist Dave Roe and Jared Taylor playing everything else – the man almost sounds happy. The band take off on 'Papermill Man', a jumping track that might fit in easily on a Stones album, but as always the acerbic biting lyrics – 'Do you live to eat, do you eat to live?' – remind us this man tells it like it is. Never an easy ride, but you wouldn't want it any other way. **JP**

THE FAIR RAIN

BEHIND THE GLASS

WWW.THEFAIRRAIN.COM

Formerly the Old Dance School, the fourth album from this contemporary folk septet finds them wandering in pastures new, on themes that include the story of a country lass being rendered mute by her first contact with the big city ('All We've Ever Known'), and the curious tale of Franz Reichelt, the French tailor who in 1912 decided to test the efficacy of his flying suit by jumping off the Eiffel Tower ('Mannequin'). Often gently played, and with arrangements that speak of hours of work, the band's restrained style is a breath of fresh air in an overcrowded, and often overworked genre. **JP**

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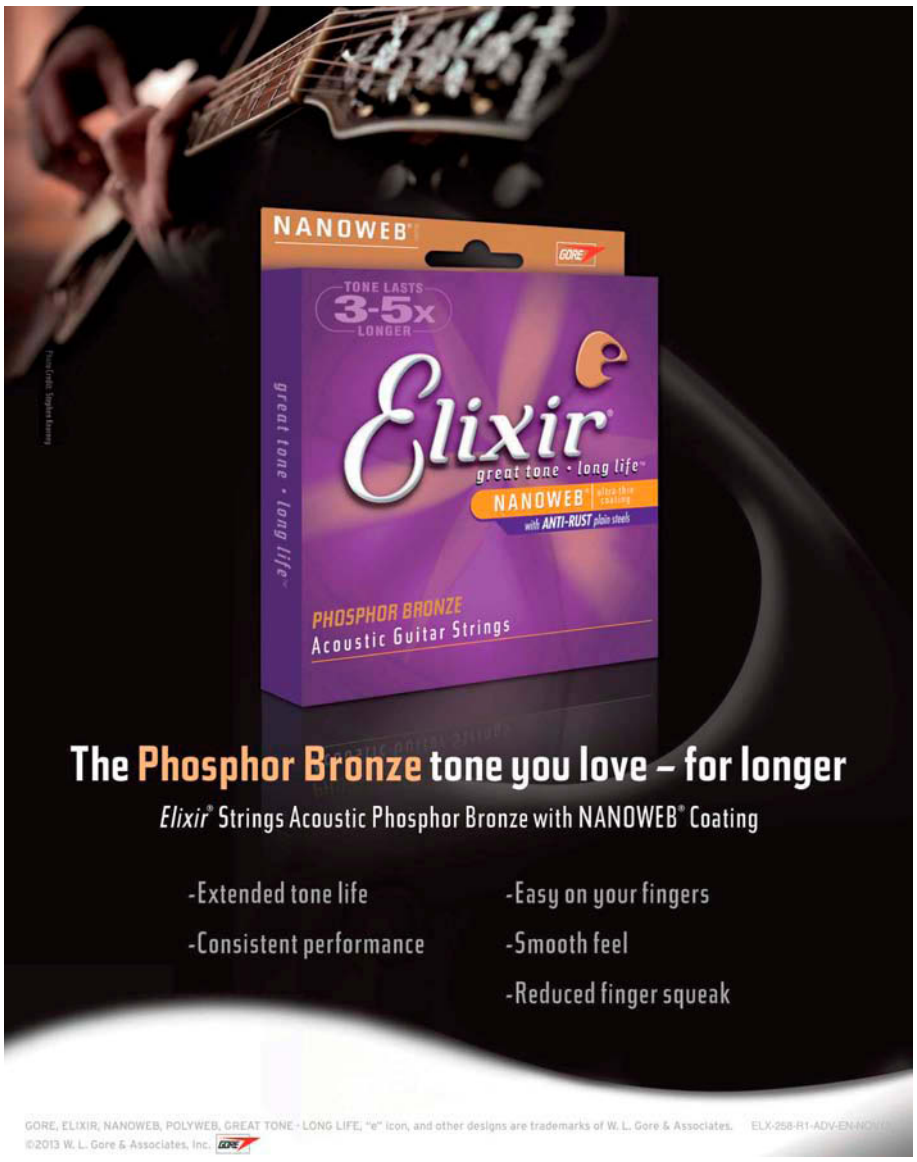
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THOMAS LEEB FINGERSTYLE VIRTUOSO

APP EXTRA

'BACH TO THE FUTURE'

Thomas guides us through one of fingerstyle genius Trevor Gordon Hall's compositions

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

I have had the pleasure of sharing a stage with Trevor Gordon Hall on various occasions and I'm always blown away by his incredible tone, touch and taste on guitar.

He is definitely one of the top acoustic fingerstyle artists of our time and can even pull off mounting a kalimba (a kind of an African thumb piano) to the top of one of his guitars without becoming simply a sideshow attraction. Since kalimbatars aren't exactly common, we are probably doing everybody a favour and sticking with one of his guitar-only tunes.

I'll let Trevor describe this piece for you: "This brief section is from a piece I wrote for two guitars, entitled 'Bach to the Future'. I initially set out to write a personal study to expand my playing. This piece combines a few different elements ranging from outlining progressions and modulations

'BACH TO THE FUTURE' – TREVOR GORDON HALL

with single notes, open string possibilities from various banjo styles, to melodies dancing around, occasionally syncing up and harmonising as they tend to do in Bach's inventions.

"The short example included here is measures 65-80 and combines resonating open strings with fretted notes, as well as harmonics – all serving as a piano sustain pedal sound – finger walking on right hand, and a few wacky modulations. This piece changed the way I view these concepts and I have used many of the tricks I learned during composing it in countless other situations." ■

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DANIEL HO GRAMMY WINNING UKULELE AND SLACK KEY GUITAR PLAYER

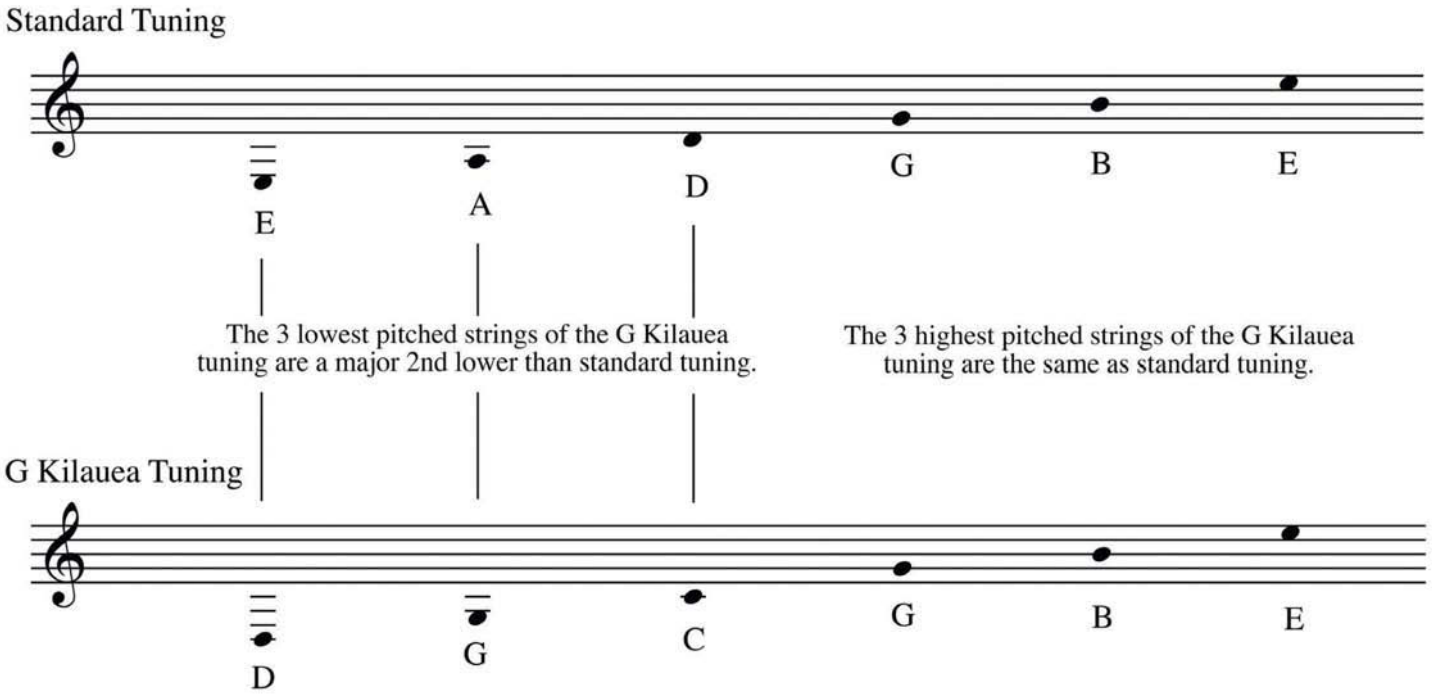
SLACK KEY GUITAR – PART III

Daniel continues to explore the G Kilauea Hawaiian tuning

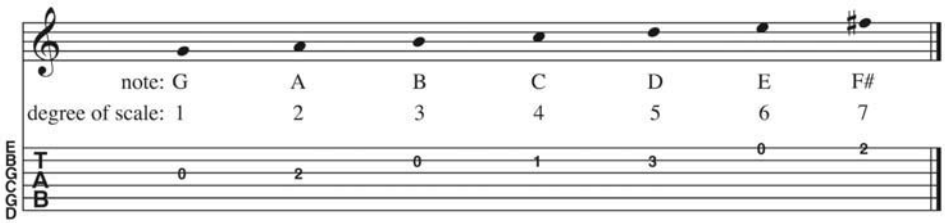
TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

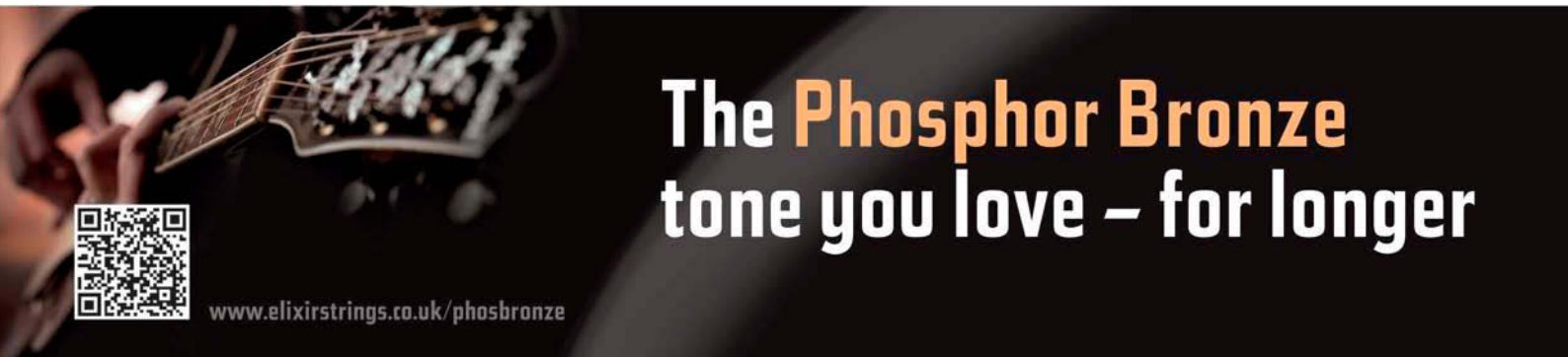
In our previous two articles, we discussed the G Kilauea Hawaiian slack key guitar tuning, and six considerations that were used to discover this tuning: string tension, key, open strings, melody, harmony, and bass. The diagram below shows how the G Kilauea tuning evolved from standard tuning by applying these principles.

Slack Key Guitar: The G Kilauea Tuning book (with mp3 audio download) by Daniel Ho is available at **www.danielho.com**

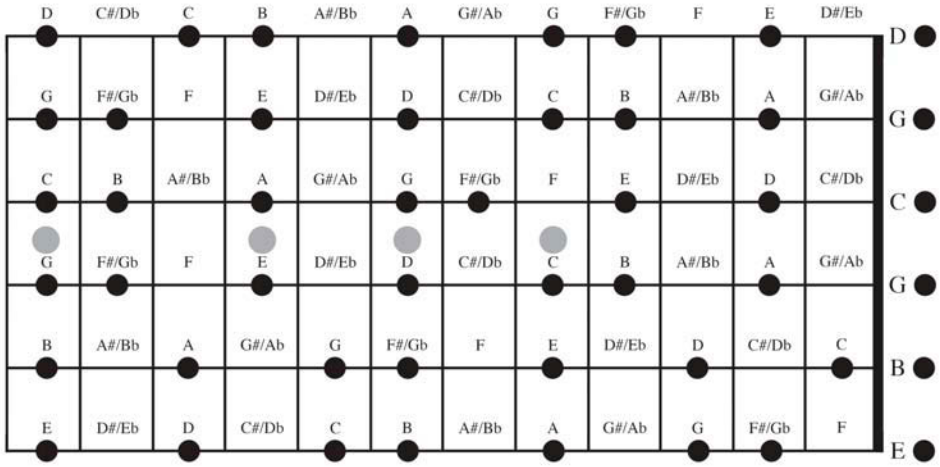


While the G Kilauea tuning is also functional in the keys of C and D, we will focus on the key of G major, for which this tuning was designed. All melodies, chords, and bass notes in the key of G are derived from the G major scale. The degrees of the scale indicate the note's relationship to the tonal center, or key of G.



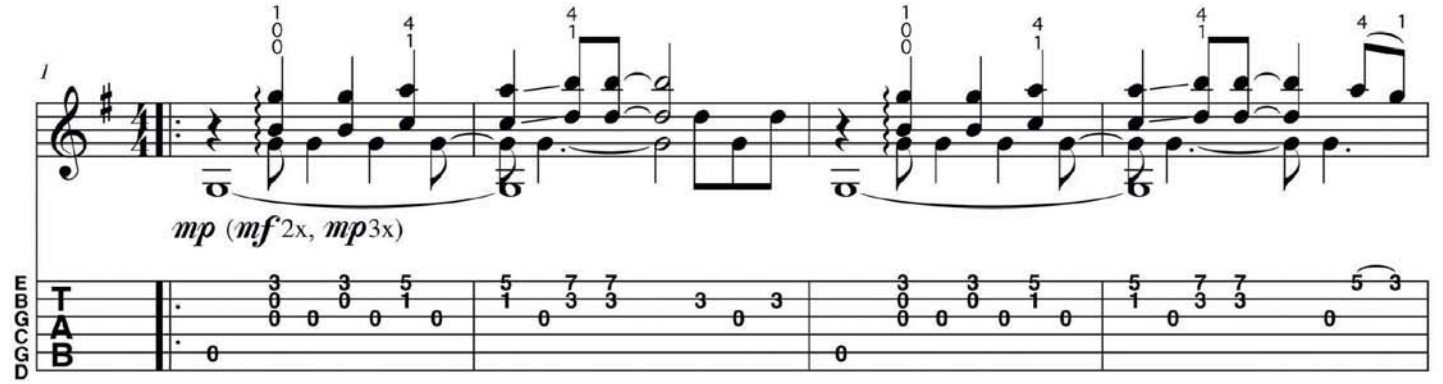


The black dots in the following graph of a guitar fretboard map out the G major scale in the G Kilauea tuning. The thick, vertical black line at the far right represents the nut of the guitar. Notice that the notes on the first (high E), second (B) and third (G) strings are fingered on the same frets as they are in standard tuning. Notes on the fourth (C), fifth (G), and sixth (D) strings need to be fingered two frets higher than standard tuning to produce the same pitches. This is because the fourth (C), fifth (G), and sixth (D) strings are tuned a major second lower than standard tuning (see the first diagram), and a major second is equivalent to the span of two frets.


D C#/Db C B A#/Bb A G#/Ab G F#/Gb F E D#/Eb D
G F#/Gb F E D#/Eb D C#/Db C B A#/Bb A G#/Ab G
C B A#/Bb A G#/Ab G F#/Gb F E D#/Eb D C#/Db C
G F#/Gb F E D#/Eb D C#/Db C B A#/Bb A G#/Ab G
B A#/Bb A G#/Ab G F#/Gb F E D#/Eb D C#/Db C B
E D#/Eb D C#/Db C B A#/Bb A G#/Ab G F#/Gb F E

One of the primary reasons for the use of alternate tunings is to increase the number of open strings available in a piece. Open strings help a guitar sound more resonant and make playing easier because the left hand is not required to finger as many strings. Now that we know where the notes are on the fretboard in this tuning, let's look at how they are used in the piece, 'Allure of the Islands'. The first four bars of 'Allure of the Islands' summarise many important aspects of the G Kilauea tuning.

'ALLURE OF THE ISLANDS'



Like a little "guitar orchestra," notice that melody, harmony, and bass are all being played simultaneously while the left hand only fingers one or two frets at a time. In addition, the melody is harmonised by a parallel sixth just below it. How is this possible when only two fingers on the left hand are being used to fret notes? The answer: open strings. Because the bass notes and chords can all be played on open strings, the left hand only needs to finger the melody and the parallel sixth below it.

The third string, G, is central to the functionality of the G Kilauea tuning. Three of the most commonly used chords in music are the I, IV, and V chords. In the key of G, they are G (I), C (IV), and D (V). The three lowest-pitched strings of the G Kilauea tuning, which represent the bass section of our "guitar orchestra," are tuned to these pitches so they can be played as open strings. The third string, G, is a common tone in these chords, and so much of the harmony can also be played as open strings. For example, the note, G, is the root of a G chord, the fifth of a C chord, and the sus4 of a D chord.

You might wonder how this is an improvement over standard tuning when the three lowest strings in standard tuning contain the roots of the V (E), I (A), and IV (D) chords in the key of A. The reason is the third string, G, is not in the key of A. This requires you to always finger the third string to harmonise chords in the key of A.

Also, the common tone, E, is on the first string where melodies are often played. This restricts the first string from being used as a common tone when melodies are being played on it.

A great deal of experimentation went into selecting the six pitches that make up the G Kilauea tuning.

In the next segment, we'll take a look at the pentatonic scale in this tuning, as well as thirds, sixths, and more interesting harmonies. ■

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CLIVE CARROLL ACOUSTIC VIRTUOSO

VOICE SEPARATION

Clive Carroll gets us splitting our bass-line from our melody with this tricky independence column

FULL TAB ONLINE

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

Lots of us enjoy playing fingerstyle blues down the neck in first position, and many are familiar with at least one or two pentatonic shapes for improvising. It can be tricky to keep the bass-line going while soloing at the same time and, with that in mind, the 10 examples in this article demonstrate how to increase voice separation between the picking-hand thumb and fingers.

It may look easy in these examples, but it needs to be played so evenly that you could set your watch to it. If a blues number lasts about three minutes, as an exercise, try playing just the open low E, in time, using a metronome marking of crochet 60. It is harder than you think.

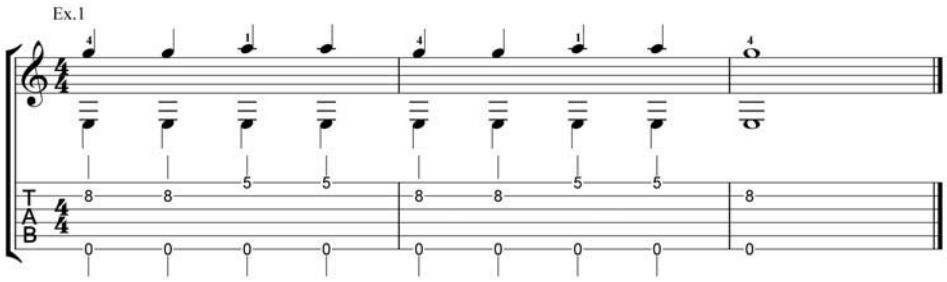
In **example 1** each note of the upper part is played at the same time as the bass E. Play through this a few times, firstly listening only to the bass-line and then only to the higher melody. Feel the groove.

In **example 2**, the bass-line is played at the same speed as before and the top line has a long/short triplet or bouncy, swing feel. There are two high notes to each bass note. At the start of bar two there is a single quarter note in the melody – remember to keep the bass-line steady throughout this slight rhythmic change.

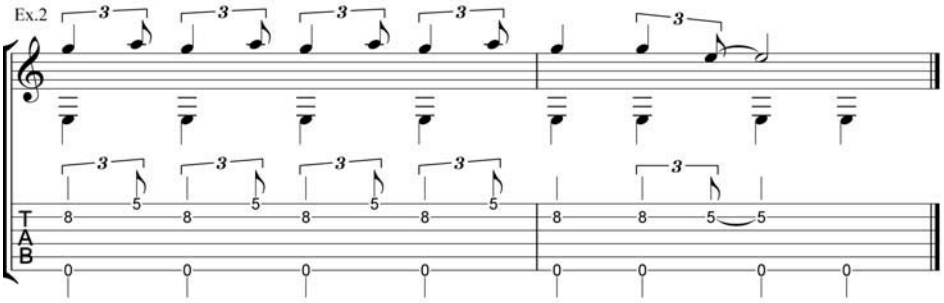
The first half of **example 3** contains the same triplet feel in the upper part though more pitches have been added. The second half of the example allows more time to concentrate on the pulsating bass.

Example 4 is all about triplets. There are now three notes to every bass note.

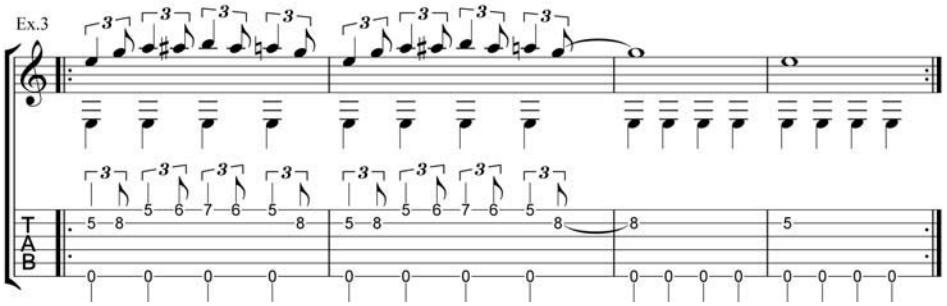
EXAMPLE 1



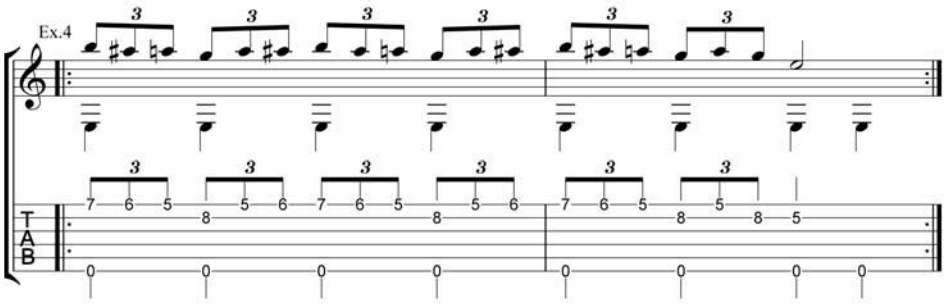
EXAMPLE 2



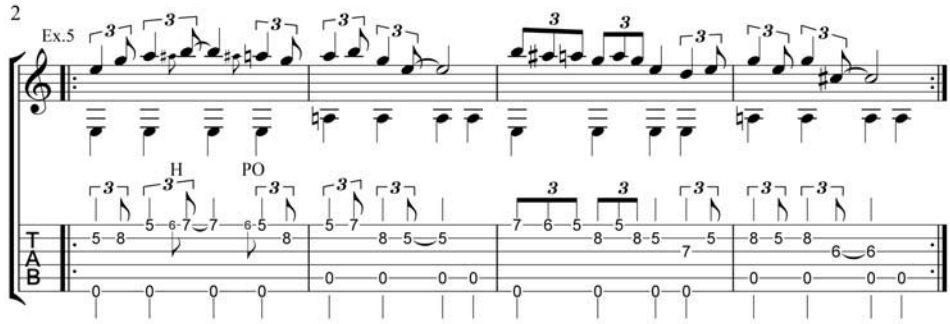
EXAMPLE 3



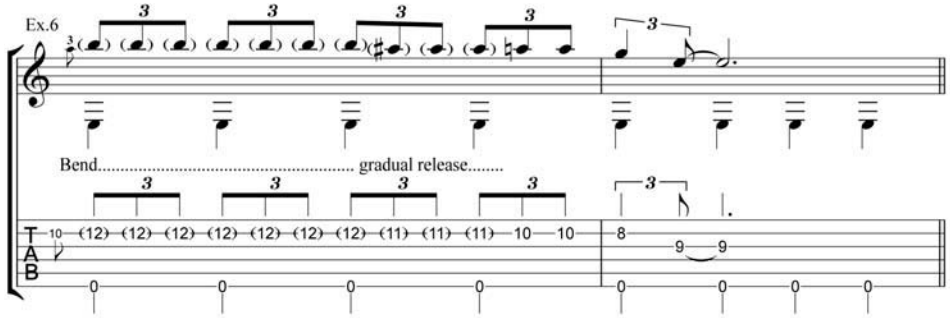
EXAMPLE 4



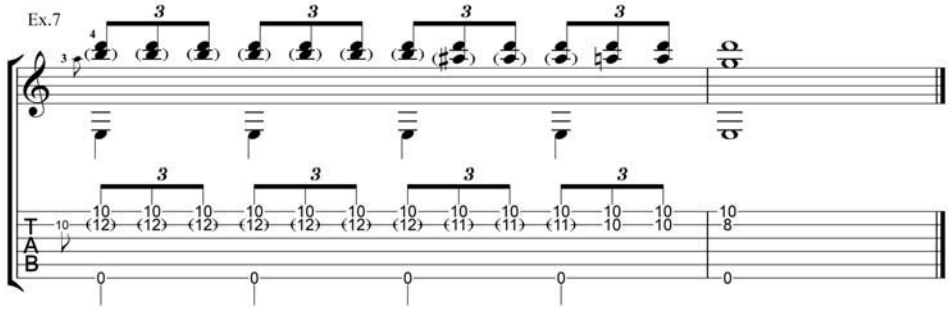
EXAMPLE 5



EXAMPLE 6



EXAMPLE 7



In **example 5** the bass part starts on low E and then switches to fifth string, open A, in bar two. This pattern is repeated in bars three and four. The upper melody includes a combination of rhythms from the previous examples, as well as a few bluesy hammer-ons and pull-offs. Once the actual notes have been learnt, remember to play in time and don't let the actual speed impact the rhythm.

Example 6 begins with a bend on string two. Use your fretting-hand finger three for the bend and pluck this and the bass note at the same time. The task here is to play triplets in the upper part and slowly release the bend back down to the note A, whilst maintaining a steady bass-line groove. This technique is something that Lightnin' Hopkins used a lot. In **example 7**, the fretting-hand fourth finger is added on high D. You are now playing triplet double-stops over the quarter-note bass-line.

Example 8 contains three fretting-hand shifts. It begins in seventh position and, halfway through bar one there is a shift down to first position. This shift occurs before moving up to the fifth position at the start of bar two. Also note the thicker chords in the last bar. As mentioned before, once you have the actual notes learnt repeat it several times and listen to the bass-line only. Do this with the upper part as well.

Example 9 focuses on block chords in the upper part and the bass-line changes from low E to low A.

We finish with **example 10**, which incorporates three-note chords, more movement in the lower line, triplets and a couple of ornaments. I hope you enjoy learning these few bars. The ultimate aim is for you to improvise freely over a pulsating bass-line. Of course sometimes you may want to play more notes in the bass and other times it can be effective to leave that part out during an improvisation. By practising and mastering these examples you will be able to do all three. ■

Examples 8 to **10** are available for download at **www.acousticmagazine.com**, while audio clips of all the examples can be found at **www.clivecarroll.co.uk.**

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LEON HUNT UK BANJO EXPERT

DEMYSTIFYING THE MODES

APP EXTRA

Leon explains why when it comes to modes, it doesn't have to be all Greek

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

At some stage in your musical development you may want to explore some of the bigger, less tangible topics such as developing your own style, composition and improvisation.

The subject of 'how on earth do I know where to put my fingers if you haven't told me already' is one of the trickiest things to teach and learn, but also one of the greatest pleasures in playing music.

Let's get the answer every music student dreads out of the way: practice and experience is indeed where it's at. We all know this deep down, but we still look for that elusive 'silver bullet'. Here comes the drudgery: the first step is to acknowledge your desire to develop your own musical voice and vocabulary. Then it's a case of maintaining the confidence to keep having a go despite the limited success you're sure to experience early on. Now for the silver bullet... well, maybe stainless steel.

I won't tackle this entire subject in one column, but we can make a decent dent in it. For me, the biggest epiphany came when I discovered the simplicity of the musical modes. These always sounded far too highbrow for a folk musician like myself, but thanks to a certain jazz pianist its usefulness was quickly proved to me.

Let's approach these modes in a couple of ways, each yielding its own set of possibilities for us as banjo players.

First, let's get rid of, at least for a while, the scary Greek stuff. Using terminology like Phrygian, Locrian, Mixolydian and the like at this stage serves little purpose other than to create a barrier to learning.

The mode every single person in the western world knows, thanks to *The Sound of Music* is the Ionian: do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. The next mode (still resisting the Greek) is exactly the same scale but starting and ending on the second note of the scale: re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do, re. The third mode starts and ends on the third note, and so on.

That's pretty much it! Simple, I think you'll agree. The important thing here as practical musicians is that once we've worked through the logistics of actually playing these things on the banjo, it provides us with the notes of the given major scale (G in the tablature) all over the fingerboard – and they are everywhere!

As if that wasn't liberating enough, it also gives us all the notes of that scale's relative (natural) minor everywhere on the fingerboard too. Talk about getting value for money!

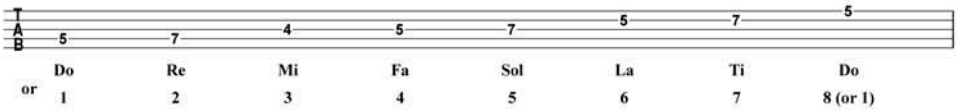
OK, so now you have masses of G major stuff all over the fingerboard. There is another way of looking at all this that will yield yet more possibilities. Again, for simplicity, let's stick with G. We're agreed that if we play that initial G scale, starting and ending on the G (the first note) we get a standard 'do, re, mi' G major scale. We're also agreed that if you play the same scale but start with the second note you still have a kind (mode) of a G scale, or at least, all the notes will form a valid part of anything you might decide to do over G.

What if we decide to identify the scale by its starting and ending notes rather than its constituent parts? If I play the second mode (or Dorian – sorry, I couldn't resist the Greek any longer) what we end up with here is an A minor scale of sorts, albeit a slightly exotic one. The next mode (Phrygian) will give a type of B minor scale and the next a type of C scale and so on. With some reverse engineering can we conclude that if the second mode of G is giving us the sound we want over an A minor, we can use all our G stuff over that A minor? Oh yes! We only learned one little G scale and now we're improvising all over the fingerboard in lots of keys using exotic scales!

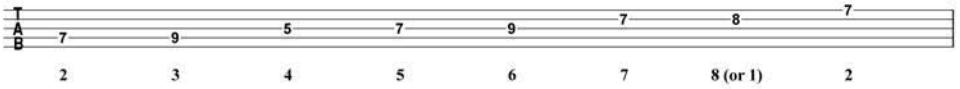
I've found the most useful modes (at least in traditional Irish and American Bluegrass/Old Time music), to be the fifth and sixth modes. The sixth (Aeolian) gives us the much talked-about relative minor; this is easily as useful as the initial first (Ionian) mode. The fifth mode (Mixolydian) i.e. using all of our G scales over the key of D, ultimately gives a regular D scale but now with a flattened 7 as opposed to the usual (major) seventh note. Try playing regular G scales over a tune like 'The Red Haired Boy' in D or 'Cooley's Reel' in Em. Works a treat!

For the above ideas to work properly, the principles of 'cadence' need to be understood and adhered to – another topic easy to get bogged down in. Yet again, to keep things practical... all western music could be described as a series of tensions and resolutions, or questions and answers. Without an answer to your question everything will be left unresolved. Cadence is the resolution of a musical phrase or line. In the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* you'll remember the 'Shave and a Haircut' scene where Roger can't resist jumping out of the wall to give the musical 'answer' to the popular refrain: "two bits". This is a good example of cadence. ■

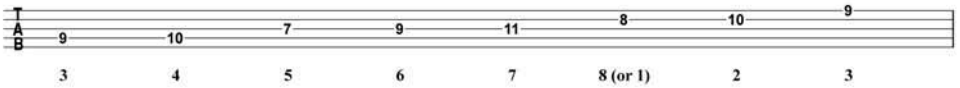
G major scale (Ionian)



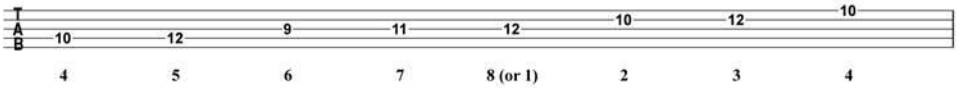
Dorian



Phrygian

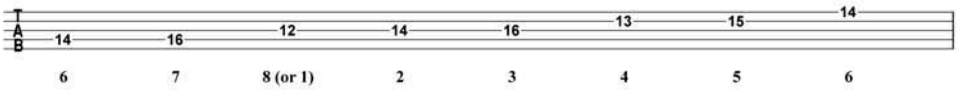


Lydian

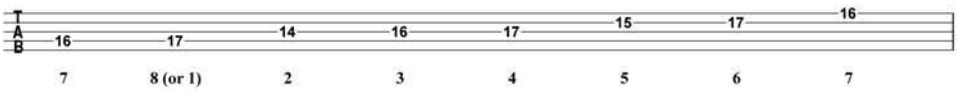


Mixolydian

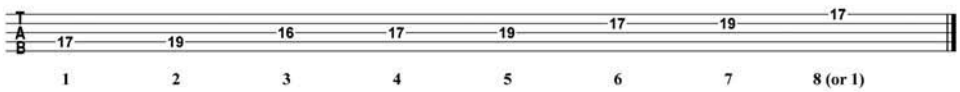
Aolian



Locrian



Ionian (An octave higher)



SOME NOTES ON SINGLE STRING PLAYING

For versatility and clarity the modes as notated here are played exclusively in the 'single-string' style. The best analogy for this approach would be to consider your index and middle finger (on your picking hand) as the up and down strokes of a plectrum. It's important to confine down strokes to your thumb and your upstrokes to your index finger. When working on any single string passages, especially in the early stages, keep an occasional check on your right hand, and correct any 'double thumbing' or 'double indexing' that you might be doing. Take into account any rhythmic rests that exist in the music. Imagine you're playing every single beat, even notes that are silent, in order to keep your fingers 'in phase' with the music. In the interests of simplicity all these examples are notated in G.

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CHRIS WOODS CONTEMPORARY ACOUSTIC GROOVE PLAYER

A LA MODE

Chris soothes your Lydian mode worries with some creative exercises

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

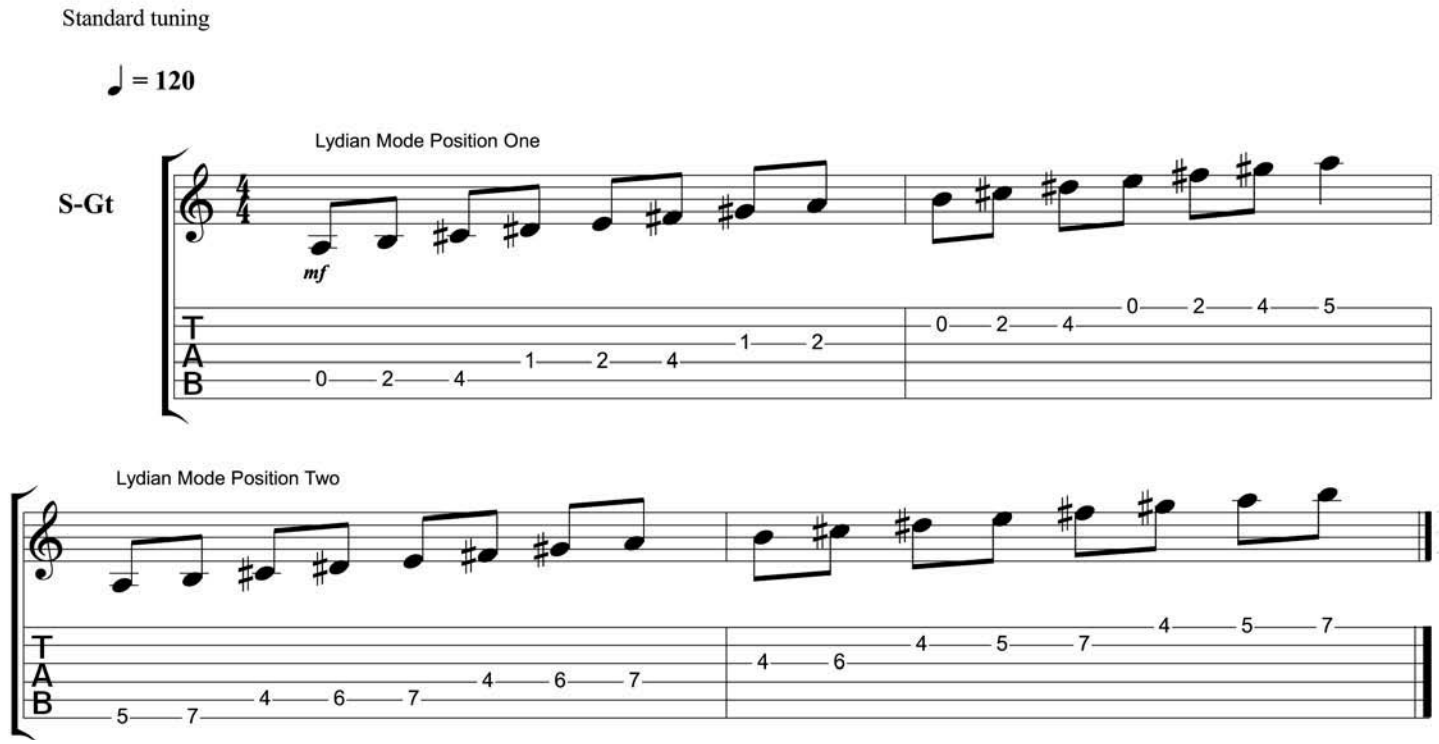
The word mode, or modal, often induces a state of panic. But, it really doesn't have to be like that. I simply see modes as variations on a major or minor scale. So presuming you know your major or minor shapes everything is really that easy.

For example, the Dorian mode is simply a minor scale with the sixth note raised by a semi-tone, and the Lydian mode is the major scale with the fourth note raised by a semi-tone (one fret). Easy peasy!

Therefore, at the end of the day the A Lydian mode is the A major scale with the fourth note of the scale sharpened. The result is a scale which has a very different kind of ambience and/or emotion, essentially a spicy nice scale.

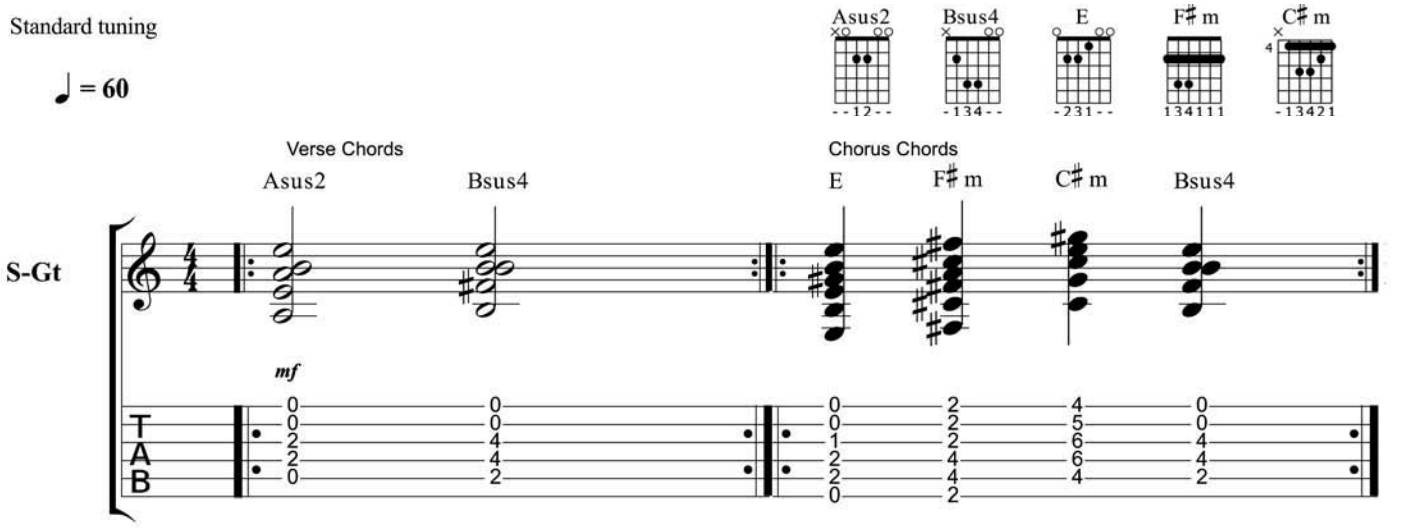
This month's lesson is focused on the A Lydian mode. I've written three examples for you. Firstly I'm offering two different scale shapes of the A Lydian mode, secondly the accompanying chord shapes and finally an example of what I might do. The examples are designed to offer inspiration for you to improvise and compose with, so get stuck in and get creative.

EXAMPLE 1



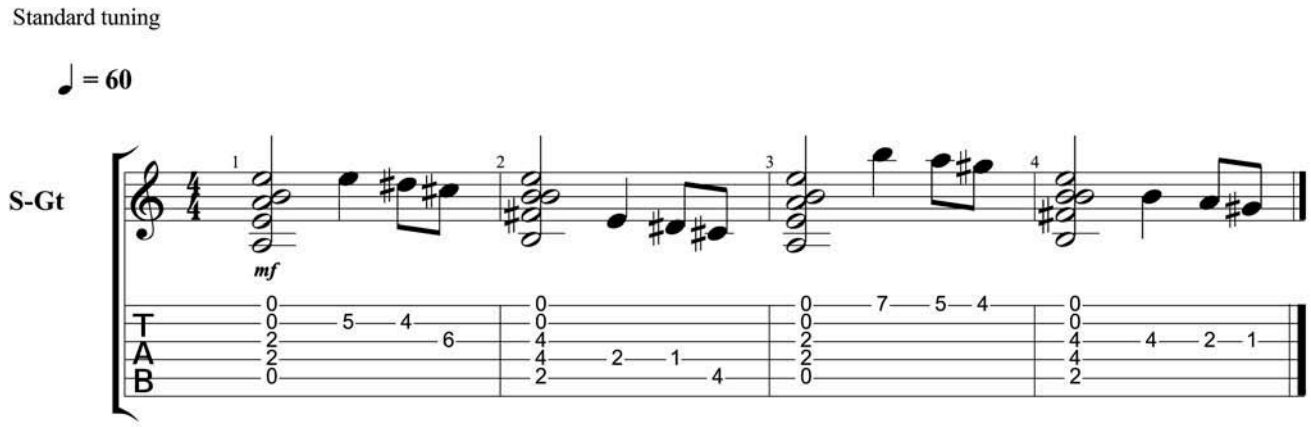
There's two scale shapes here for you, both of the A Lydian mode, just played in different positions. If modes haven't ever quite made sense to you, now is the ideal time to learn your A major scale and discover the differences for yourself. The ultimate aim is for you to be able to explore these scales and create some melodies of your own.

EXAMPLE 2



So, when we change the notes in the A major scale, we also in turn have to slightly adjust the chords. Since the chords in the key of A major are constructed from the relevant scale notes, the chords available inevitably change. The most basic difference is the second chord in the key of A major – traditionally this is a B minor, but now with the fourth note raised the B minor becomes a B major, or something similar. Essentially the minor third from the B no longer works. In this example I have created a basic chord structure with a verse and chorus in mind. The chords will work with the A Lydian mode. Experiment with the chords for both the verse section and the chorus section and try adding in melodies from the previous example.

EXAMPLE 3



This is an example of what I might do with a verse section. Nothing fancy, just a basic idea that might help with some inspiration. I have simply created a three-note melody from the scale shapes in **Example 1** and played them after the chords from **Example 2.** I'm sure you can create something far more exciting on your own, but it's helpful to see one way of getting started. It's important to remember: there are no rules, just ideas... have fun! ■

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PAUL BRETT VINTAGE GUITAR EXPERT AND 12-STRING AFICIONADO

12-STRING CORNER

Paul Brett on Lead Belly, Blind Willie McTell and their Oscar Schmidt Stella 12-strings

APP EXTRA

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

Probably the most desired 12-string in the world is the one made by Fulvio Pardini for Lead Belly in the mid 1930s under the Stella brand. It is rumoured that Kurt Cobain, as a major Lead Belly fan, asked David Geffen to buy this iconic guitar for him – but it was not for sale. Certainly the rendering of Lead Belly's 'Black Girl' (also known as 'In the Pines', 'My Girl' or 'Where Did You Sleep Last Night?') that Cobain sang in Nirvana's Unplugged live video, was a testament to his admiration for the big man's songs. When 12-string guitar playing is brought up in discussion, it is usually Lead Belly's name that comes up.

> **"It's impossible to assess the influence of both these legendary players on the music scene through the years"**

However, despite being referred to as a bluesman, Lead Belly was in the main, more of a folk singer, especially compared to fellow 12-string pioneer Blind Willie McTell. Their common bond throughout their careers was a major liking for Oscar Schmidt's Stella guitars. This could actually be due to Oscar Schmidt's Stella brand being one of the few makers putting out 12-strings at the time– as well as their inexpensive pricing at the time.

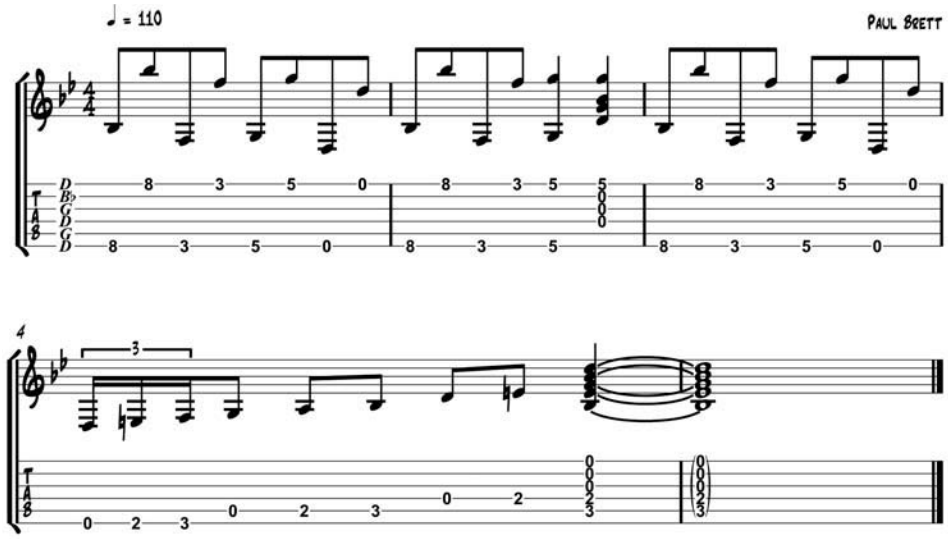
It's impossible to assess the influence of both these legendary players on the music scene through the years, but it's fair to say that British pop music may not have developed if Lonnie Donegan had not had massive chart success with some of Lead Belly's songs like 'Rock Island Line'. Blind Willie's 'Statesboro' Blues' has been covered by many top artists and like 'Rock Island Line', remains one of the iconic blues songs. Blind Willie, unlike Lead Belly, was a pure bluesman and a more accomplished 12-string player in my opinion.

Let's face it, there were probably more 12-string players around at that time who were not discovered or recorded and we will never know what creative force they could have added to the timeline. Barbeque Bob was also plying his trade at the time, with recordings released on Columbia Records' Race label. But it was the former two that have remained the doyens in 12-string history: Lead Belly was king and Willie the prince.

EXAMPLE 1

EXAMPLE 2

EXAMPLE 3



Their Stella guitars became a legendary part of their musical legacies and that's what makes them so desirable today. They are rare and not cheap to buy in very good condition; the right model can set you back thousands. The most expensive one I have seen on offer (excluding Lead Belly's) was priced at $60,000. Generally they can be sourced for between $5k and $20k, depending on rarity and condition.

I currently have two. One is a jumbo size, similar to the one Lead Belly used, and the other is an exceptionally rare model that Blind Wille played in the late 30s. It was branded a Stella 'Westbrook' and unlike all its predecessors, had a solid headstock (not a slotted one as all other early Stellas had), a longer scale length and was made from all solid birch. A trapeze tailpiece and movable bridge are simplistic additions, but the whole things works beautifully as a really powerful blues monster. British 12-string pioneer John Joyce, when he was alive, said it was the best 12-string for blues he had ever heard or played. Believe me, John knew what he was talking about with 12-strings as those of you who knew him would concur.

Where is this leading? Well, this year Vintage Guitars and I are releasing a 12-string acoustic based as closely as we can on Willie's Westbrook with a few modern updates, including a Fishman Rare Earth blend pick-up. This will give players the option to play acoustic or amplified as most players seem to do these days. As usual with Vintage guitars, the price will not be in the thousands and if our plans come to fruition, Willie's historical blues machine and Statesboro' Blues will live again!

I have three new exercises for you in this month's issue. The first two are slow picking riffs which will add to your controlled fingerpicking skills and the last one is based on the low end of the 12-string and is a strident exercise run. Thanks to Mark Thompson for the tabs. Enjoy! ■

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MATT STEVENS INSTRUMENTAL COMPOSER

IN THE LOOP

Matt lets us in on the secret of working with multiple loops

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

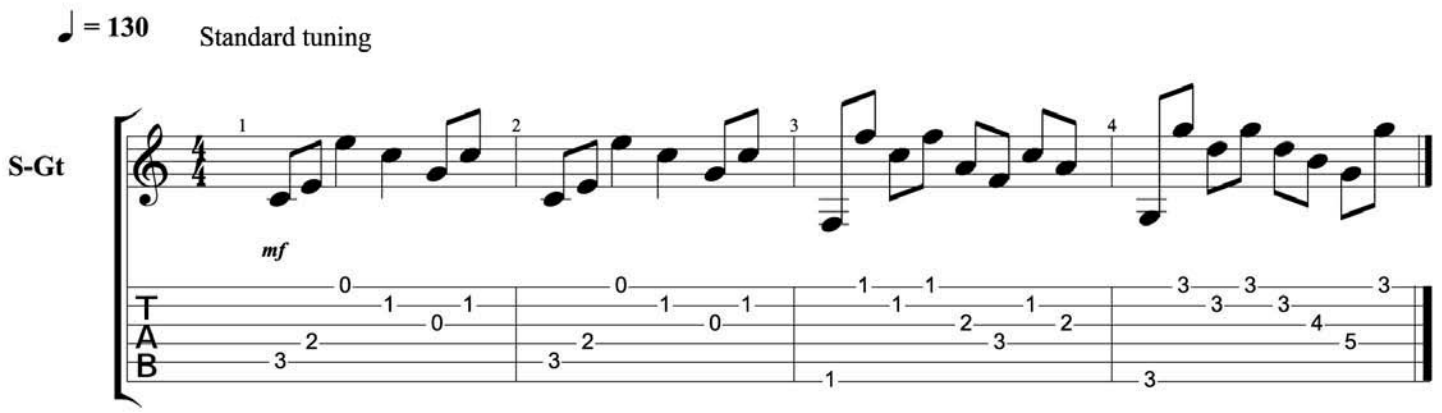
One of the criticisms of live looping is that it is too repetitive; that a few seconds of music constantly repeating can get boring. This was a big problem for the initial wave of loop pedals as they could only record one loop at a time, but thanks to modern hardware loopers we can now create multiple loops to build whole songs with multiple sections using just a loop pedal and an acoustic guitar. With a few loops you can move from verse to chorus with perhaps even a middle eight for variation. Loop pedals like the Boss RC-300, The Boomerang and the Pigtronix Infinity Looper let us use more than one loop in a song. You still have the ability to build up layers on top of the loops as you record them and improvise in front of an audience. Even when you're just practising at home, being able to create a song from loops as you go is a very useful compositional tool. Some loopers allow you to have as many as three or four loops available to structure different sections of a song.

The key to using multiple loops is getting them perfectly in time. You have to get the first loop in time for the entire arrangement to work. If you're struggling, practise along to a metronome; it can really help, especially if you tap along with your foot to help coordinate your feet to operate the pedals. **Example 1** is our initial loop, a simple three-chord C, F and G chord progression. We're going to keep it fairly simple here as the important thing is to get used to playing multiple loops. Hit loop record on your loop pedal and record in loop one. This is the verse section of our song. Make sure your loop pedal is on an ergonomic position on your pedal board so that you can operate it quickly and easily – this can really help. If you're reaching up above a load of other pedals it can make a challenging task next to impossible. Keep your loop pedal at the bottom of your pedal board, closest to your feet.

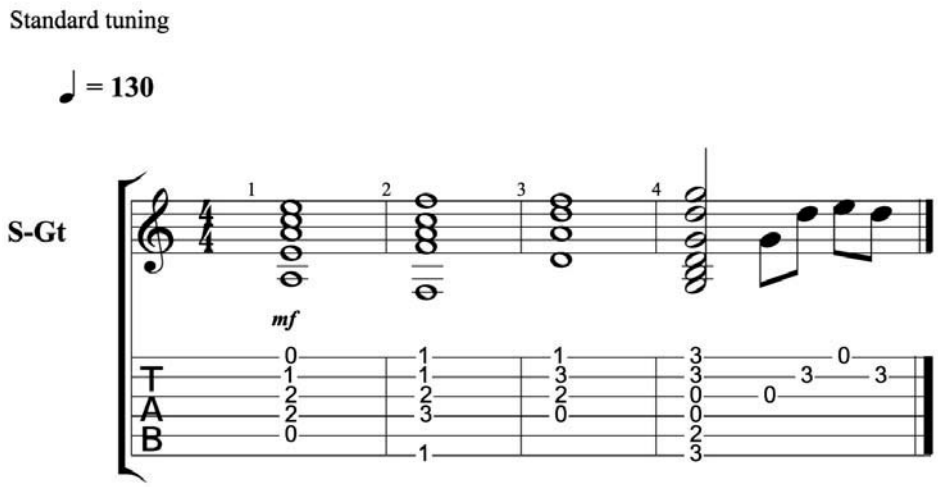
Once **example 1** is looping around you can sing, play or add more layers to it. Now we can move onto our second loop track, which is the chord sequence Am, F, Dm and then G with a little melodic arpeggio at the end as shown in **example 2**. On many loop pedals that hold multiple tracks you need to prime the second loop track, like you would if you were recording on a multi-track recorder or digital audio workstation. Prime your second loop footswitch and record in **example 2**. Ensure that this second loop is at exactly the same tempo as the initial one. This isn't easy but try and feel the rhythm with your foot as you transfer from one section to another. This can loop round again before you switch back to the first loop from **example 2**. It will take time to get these multiple loops perfectly sync'd but with practice it gets much easier.

Now we have our two loops recorded into the looper we can switch between them, record additional layers onto them and build a song from them. If you have a pedal with more than two tracks you could also add a middle eight, bridge or some other kind of break down or variation.

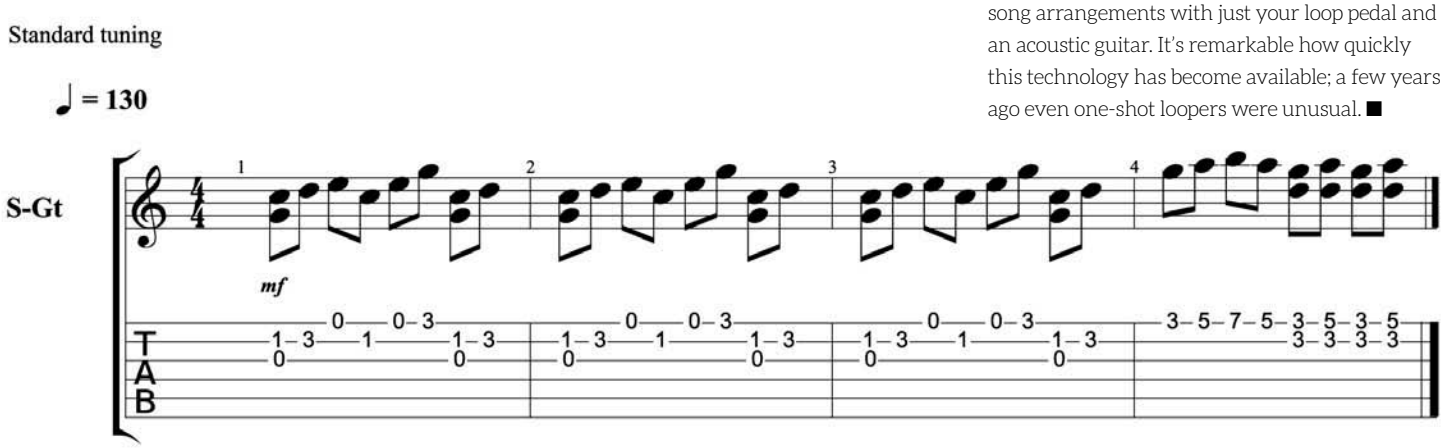
EXAMPLE 1



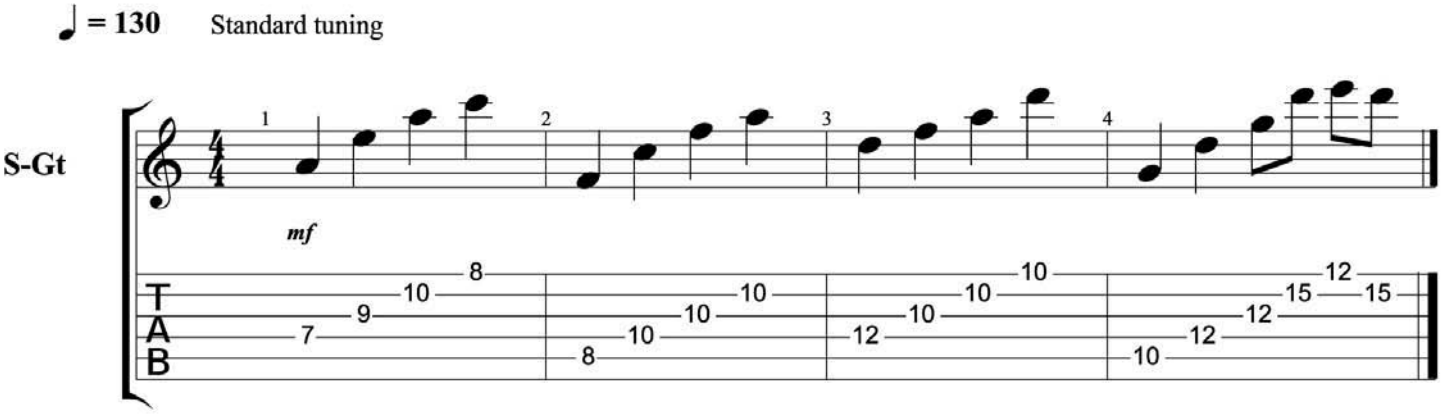
EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



Example 3 is a simple melodic part that fits overthe first loop, or verse, that you recorded in **example 1**. Switch back to loop one and hit overdub/record and add the part from**example 3**. If you structure your song between the two loops you can build up the layers each time you switch from one loop to another, adding parts as required. **Example 4** is another layer to be overdubbed onto **Example 2**, your second loop or chorus. This should help to develop the section as it comes to the second repeat, if you're working on a verse/chorus or loop one/loop two format for your song. Build up the layers as you go – if you have a microphone connected up to your loop pedal you can even add percussion or vocal layers, it's up to you. Later in the song you could erase one of your loops and create another one for a middle eight or bridge.

Experiment with different arrangements; with loops it's easy to try new things even if it's just as part of your songwriting process and you plan to play the final arrangement with a full band. With multiple loops you can really start to build up full song arrangements with just your loop pedal and an acoustic guitar. It's remarkable how quickly this technology has become available; a few years ago even one-shot loopers were unusual. ■

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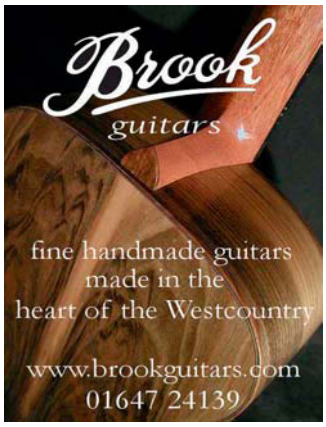

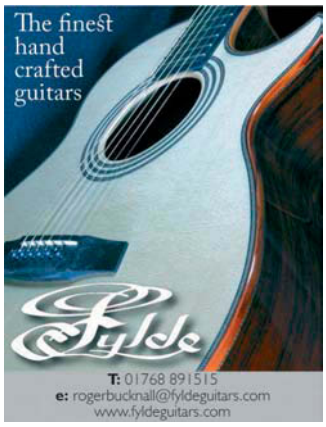

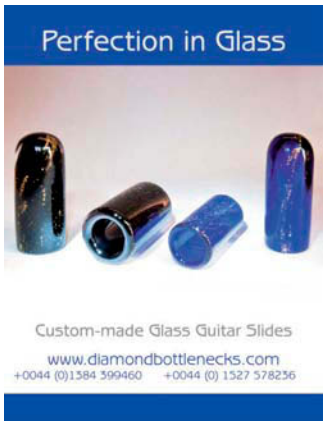

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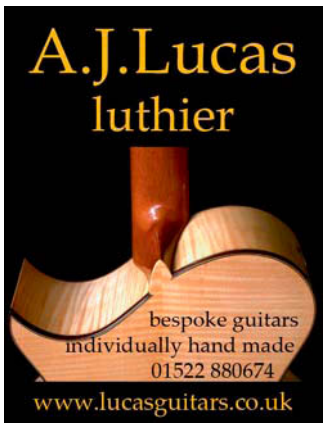

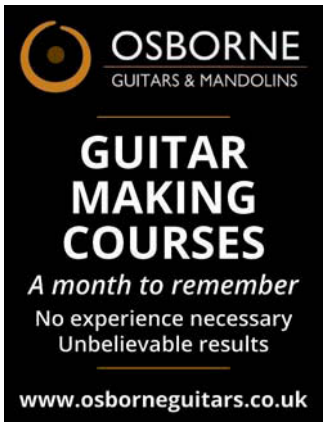

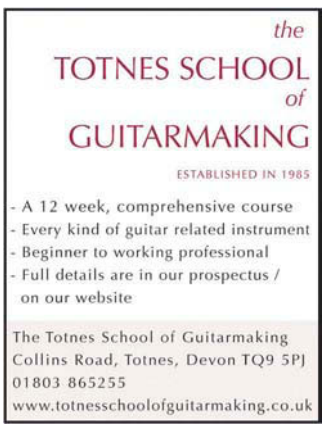

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STEPHEN STILLS

WORDS: TERI SACCONE

One of the foremost singer-songwriters of the rock era, Stephen Stills' superb voice and songwriting have somewhat overshadowed his remarkable talents as both an acoustic and electric guitarist.

Aside from towering contributions to Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills & Nash, Stills' adept fingerpicking and odd tunings across myriad recordings elevate him to guitar hero status. His shimmering guitars and incredible feel on early CSN intoxicate the listener, and the Martin Dreadnought guitars meld seamlessly with the voices on tracks such as 'Suite: Judy Blue Eyes', and 'Helplessly Hoping', among them.

Born in Dallas, Texas in 1945, Stills caught the music bug early on and was eight when he got his first guitar. Growing up, Stephen was initially influenced by the big band records his dad played by artists such as Tommy Dorsey and Bob Crosby And The Bobcats.

Soon he was scouring record stores for old blues releases and learning Travis picking. "The Jimmy Reed stuff was the first stuff I learned because it was pretty easy. That was really great training," he said.

Stills' first guitar was a Guild until he was able to purchase a coveted Martin Herringbone. He's had a lifelong devotion to Martin Dreadnoughts.

By 15, he was playing professionally and relocated to New York City after dropping out of college to pursue music more fervently. He joined a Greenwich Village folk group (the Au Go-Go Singers) on guitar, meeting a future collaborator in bandmate/guitarist Richie Furay. The group gelled on the scene but never really broke through commercially. It was on a tour of Canada that the folksters opened for the Squires (an early Neil Young group). Stills left the Au Go-Go Singers in late '64, moving to Los Angeles and immersing himself in the emerging folk rock scene of the west coast. In early '65, Stills, Furay and Young were now all in LA and they soon forged country-rock band Buffalo Springfield. One year later they released their first and sole hit, Still's anthemic composition 'For What It's Worth'. Despite their meteoric rise, personality clashes hampered the Springfield during their brief career and although they influenced many artists who followed, including the Eagles, the band dissolved within two years. Undaunted, Stills released *Super Session* in '68 with ace guitarists Mike Bloomfield and Al Kooper contributing. During recording there was a jam with David Crosby and Graham Nash (of the Byrds and the Hollies respectively), which led to the formation of supergroup Crosby, Stills & Nash. Their tight three-part harmonies were immediately embraced and the group became instantly revered. They released their self-titled debut album in 1968 launched by the aforementioned 'Suite: Judy Blue Eyes', written by Stills for his ex-paramour, folk singer Judy Collins. Ironically, CSN's first official gig was a performance at Woodstock covering Joni Mitchell's single 'Woodstock', and making it their own. By 1970, the group had expanded to include Neil Young when he was not touring to support his own burgeoning career. *Déjà Vu*, their next release was massive commercially yet the band were also critical darlings . Despite the four member's vast experience and talents, CSN&Y shed light on each member's unique talents while they coalesced perfectly in union. The live album *Four Way Street* (1970) only furthered their cause, yet Stills simultaneously released his self-titled solo debut, *Sparked*, propelled by giant single 'Love The One You're With'.

Sparked features appearances by Stills' friends Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton. Despite heavy CSN&Y and solo commitments at this period, Stills managed another group Manassas (which included ex-Byrd Chris Hillman). Although the two Manassas albums are crucial for any hardcore Stills fan, the band was not promoted nearly enough to compete alongside Stills' other projects. Stills also collaborated with Young both live and in the studio (on Young's incredible *Long May You Run*) during the 70s and continued to record and tour with Crosby and Nash throughout the decade, selling millions of albums as they had in the 60s. Stills released solo work in the 80s as CSN continued to make music with another popular release '82's *Daylight Again*. Though Stephen had been plagued with hearing loss from childhood, which impacted his singing voice, CSN continue to tour with Stills' voice restored thanks to modern hearing aids.■

Artist: Martin Dujlovski – **Eliza and the Bear**

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